

THE SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY OF THE
'MONK-BISHOP'
EASTERN ELEMENTS IN SOME WESTERN
HAGIOGRAPHY OF THE FOURTH AND
FIFTH CENTURIES

WHEN we set side by side fourth- and fifth-century ascetical texts from the eastern and western empire, we find, in addition to more obvious links between them, some less familiar parallels. Take, for example, the brilliant portrait of Pambo in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*.¹ His face, we are told, shone with the glory of Adam, like that of Moses on Mount Sinai; *καὶ ἦν ὡς βασιλεὺς καθήμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ*. Here the writer makes a clear connection between the awe-inspiring majesty normally associated with secular power and the spiritual authority of the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets.² Turn now to a western text, where Sulpicius Severus describes how he saw in a dream his patron and hero, Martin of Tours. 'Cum repente sanctum Martinum episcopum videre mihi videor, praetextum toga candida, vultu igneo, stellantibus oculis, crine purpureo; atque ita mihi in ea habitudine corporis formaque qua noveram videbatur ut, quod eloqui nobis paene difficile est, non possit aspici, cum possit agnoscere. Adridensque mihi paululum, libellum, quem de vita illius scripseram, dextera praefererebat.'³ Here again, a quasi-imperial iconography is combined with the image of a holy man standing with book in hand, as Moses held the tablets of the Law, and commanding the spiritual allegiance of his intimate followers.⁴

¹ *Apophthegmata Patrum*, PG lxxv (= G), Pambo 12.

² Cf. Nau 226 (for full references, cf. p. 381, n. 2 below): *ἴδον ἐγὼ λαμβάνω τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ κάθημαι ἐπὶ θρόνου κρίσεως. τί οὖν θέλεις ἵνα ποιήσω σοι;* Wilhelm Bousset, quoting the sixth-century Latin translation (*Vitae Patrum*, v. x. 95, PL lxxiii. 930) takes this question seriously, *Apophthegmata* (Tübingen, 1923), p. 80; but the context suggests as a possibility that the father was being sarcastic. Cp. also references to the *βασιλικὴ ὁδός* of the fathers, G Benjamin 5, Poemen 31; and Serapion 3: *ἄσπερ οἱ στρατιῶται τοῦ βασιλέως . . . οὗτος καὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος . . .* For a Palestinian parallel, cf. Palladius, *Lausiac History*, ed. Cuthbert Butler (Cambridge, 1904) (= HL), xlvi.

³ Sulpicius Severus, *Ep. 2. 3, Vie de saint Martin*, ed. Jacques Fontaine (Paris, 1967) (= Vie), I. 324/6.

⁴ Both W. N. Schumacher, 'Dominus legem dat', *Römische Quartalschrift*, liv (1959), pp. 1–39, and Fontaine, *Vie*, III. 1196, point to the N.T. inspiration of this image. That it may have had a longer biblical history is suggested by the comments of Peter Nagel, *Die Motivierung der Askese in der alten Kirche und der Ursprung des Mönchtums* (Berlin, 1966), pp. 70–4. For valuable comment on this

The value of pointing to such parallels can be fully assessed only as part of a more general inquiry into the possible links between ascetical circles in East and West. But, if we concern ourselves for the moment with the more limited problem of what purposes lay behind the hagiography of the period, these quotations should prompt us to ask whether similar attitudes to spiritual authority might not have been found in both halves of the empire. Of course, eastern texts such as that describing Pambo dealt most of all with the status of ascetical leaders in the eyes of their colleagues and disciples, while the literature of the west represented by Sulpicius was concerned more with the role of bishops. We are asking, therefore, whether the authority of the desert fathers was interpreted at the time as in any way different from that of certain western bishops, who seem to have evoked in their followers a similar reverence. At what must be a preliminary stage of the inquiry, we shall allow ourselves to view the historical situation largely through the eyes of men who were themselves historians—not because other evidence is lacking, but because the attitudes of these contemporary writers had by themselves a vital effect on the history of the period. We shall be drawing upon a corpus of literature which was nothing less than a form of religious propaganda, dedicated to the memory of holy men, and designed to preserve and spread further their influence.

Before turning our attention to the West (and in particular to the biographies of Ambrose, Martin, and Augustine), we must examine in detail certain features of eastern asceticism. We are attempting to clarify and explain an attitude of mind; and there is no doubt that the *Apophthegmata Patrum* enable us, more than any other material, to lay bare the subjective elements of Egyptian asceticism. They try to solve problems in human relationships; and they concentrate on the wisdom and spiritual energy that attracted ascetics one to another, and on the sanctions that held them together.¹ Yet our western sources are also

passage (as in several other matters, particularly at p. 385, n. 2; p. 399, n. 1; and p. 410, n. 9), my thanks are due to Mr. Peter Brown of All Souls College.

¹ In an attempt to arrive at an early corpus of apophthegmata, I have limited myself to those which appear in both *PG* lxv. 72–440, and the sixth-century translation by Pelagius and John, *PL* lxxiii. 851–1062 (following Jean-Claude Guy, *Recherches sur la tradition grecque des Apophthegmata Patrum* (Brussels, 1962), p. 231), and to those edited by F. Nau which form 'le noyau primitif de la série des anonymes' (Guy, p. 79), published in the *Revue de l'Orient chrétien*, xiii–xviii (1908–13) under the general title, 'Histoires des solitaires égyptiens (MS Coislin 126, fol. 158 sqq.)'; but I have used some others which seem to conform to Guy's 'type primaire' ('Remarques sur le texte des Apophthegmata Patrum', *Recherches de science religieuse*, xlivi (1955), 252–8). The relevant Nau texts are distributed as follows: Nau 133–74 = *ROC* xiii. 45–57; Nau 175–215 = *ROC* xiii. 266–83; Nau 216–97 = *ROC* xiv. 357–79; Nau 298–334 = *ROC* xvii. 204–11; Nau 335–58 = *ROC* xvii. 294–301; and Nau 359–69 = *ROC* xviii. 137–40.

biographical and descriptive; and so, in order to make just comparisons, we need a more objective account of desert society, and of the framework within which these human encounters took place. Such an account is provided in two sources especially, the Greek lives of Pachomius, and Palladius's *Lausiac History*.¹ These sources do not refer to widely differing worlds.² There is plenty of concern in the *Apophthegmata* with the coenobitic life;³ and, as we shall see, the status of Pachomius or Theodore in the eyes of their followers was not very different from that enjoyed by Poemen or Arsenius, even though the latter's daily lives may have been less formally organized. All these texts propose solutions to the same spiritual problems, many of them social in character.⁴

In order to discover how Egyptian ascetics interpreted spiritual authority, it is necessary to examine the faith and reverence with which such authority was accepted among them. Disciples are shown asking their masters questions of the greatest simplicity, reflecting a confidence that virtually anything the father might say would be to their benefit.⁵ *Εἰπέ μοι λόγον* was their traditional request.⁶ They refused to restrict the father's reply by the shortcomings of their own self-knowledge, or the limits of any particular difficulty. They asked questions of considerable scope—*πῶς σωθῶ*—trusting that the dialogue to follow would answer to their deepest need, and concern itself with the very roots of spirituality.⁷

¹ *S. Pachomii Vitae Graecae*, ed. Francis Halkin (Brussels, 1932). I shall refer almost exclusively to the *Vita Prima* (= *VP*).

² Bousset makes, I think, too sharp a division, *Apophthegmata*, pp. 91–2.

³ Antony, who supposedly praised the coenobitic experiments of Pachomius (*VP*, 120), showed concern for his fellow ascetics, G Antony 21 and 23. Other desert fathers became involved in the spiritual direction of coenobitic monks, G Agathon 1 (although in its present form the story has passed through a long oral and written tradition, Derwas Chitty, *The Desert a City* (Oxford, 1966), p. 80, n. 117), Daniel 6, Isaac of Thebes 1, Nisteroos the Coenobite 2, Poemen 70; Nau 229. Cf. also G Epiphanius 3, Theodore of Pherme 2, Macarius Aeg. 2; Nau 153, 177, 201, 207 (this last to be compared with G Theodore of the Ennaton 2).

⁴ Fathers continually debated whether the manual work on which they depended (in itself an external and corporate affair) would interfere with their union with God, G Antony 18, Agathon 8 and 9, Theodore of Eleutheropolis 2, John Colobos 2 and 34, Longinus 1, Poemen 168, Sisoes 13. Other anxieties—about fornication (G Poemen 62), charity (G Poemen 64), loneliness in time of trial (Nau 215), inability to play one's part in the community (G Pistamon), because of false modesty (Nau 195) or laziness (G John Colobos 19; Nau 202)—are matched almost exactly in the catechesis of Pachomius: cf. particularly *VP*, 96.

⁵ For belief in the sheer power of words, cf. G Achilas 4, Ammoes 2; Nau 183, 184, 227.

⁶ e.g., G Arsenius 9, Macarius Aeg. 2 and 34, Moses 6, Pistos and Sisoes 16.

⁷ e.g., G Euprepios 7; Nau 143. For less direct reference to salvation, cf. G Antony 3, Ammonas 1 and 4, Biare 1, Cassian 5, Pambo 2; Nau 217, 223.

These general questions attempted to elicit an epitome of the father's teaching, to discover his favourite insight, summed up in one phrase 'das geistige Eigentum des Abbas'.¹ They believed that, taken as a starting point, such brief statements (more often than not quotations from or allusions to, the text of Scripture)² would inevitably lead them to further spiritual progress.

The same trust was shown in conversations of a more detailed nature. Disciples believed that their spiritual fathers possessed the insight necessary to identify and describe their personal problems, and to propose for them suitable solutions.³ Paul, the disciple of Antony, supposedly saw the souls of his companions as clearly as their faces.⁴ Far from inspiring fear, such formidable gifts prompted ascetics to reveal their *λογισμοί*, their innermost thoughts, to their elders.⁵ They asked for instruction, not only in the general principles of the spiritual life, but also in regard to more particular courses of action calculated to solve their immediate difficulties.⁶

Finally, there was among them a widespread confidence in the worth of the father's own pattern of life. Men were naturally curious about the behaviour of well-known ascetics, and would travel great distances, in order to admire it for themselves. There was also a more serious-minded conviction that, if one imitated others, if one modelled one's own life on theirs, one would arrive at a similar state of perfection.⁷ The

¹ Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, p. 82.

² For emphasis on Scripture as a source of authority, cf. especially G Antony 3; Nau 217; *VP*, 88; *Vita Tertia*, 42. For scriptural analysis as a method of instruction, cf. G Arsenius 42, Zeno 4, Poemen 16, 50, 53, 60, 118, Hyperechius 1, 2, 5. L. Regnault, in his introduction to *Les Sentences des pères du désert* (Solesmes, 1966), p. 9, suggests that questioners were already widely familiar with Scripture, and wanted only to grasp its application to a particular situation. It would seem, however, that the huge scope of the questions and the relative brevity of the answers suggest, for the early period, the exact inversion of this interpretation. Jean-Claude Guy, 'Note sur l'évolution du genre apophthegmatique', *Revue d'ascétisme et de mystique*, xxxii (1956), p. 64, would appear much closer to the mark. Cf. the link made by Cassian between 'volutatio unius versiculi' and 'conpendiosa meditatio', *Conferences*, ed. E. Pichery (Paris, 1955), x. 12. Ascetics recognized a direct connection between the brevity of the elder's reply and the pithy character of Scripture itself, *VP*, 17. On the availability of texts, G Gelasius 1 and most of the references given by Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, p. 82, n. 3, are of a late date; but earlier hints appear in G Serapion 2, and *HL* xxi.

³ Περὶ κρυπτῶν λογισμῶν ἐρωτᾷ τις, καὶ τῶν γερόντων ἔστι τὸ δοκιμάσαι, Poemen S 2 (Guy, *Recherches*, p. 30). ⁴ G Paul the Simple.

⁵ G Ammonas 4, Cyrus, Nisteros the Coenobite 2, Poemen 1; Nau 164, 195, 219; *HL* xviii and xix.

⁶ G Ares, Zacharias 3, John Colobos 19, Joseph of Panephysis 3 and 4, Motios 1, Poemen 8 and 50, Pistamon; Nau 141, 202, 215.

⁷ καὶ ἐν τῷ ἐγγίζειν ἑκεῖνῳ . . . διδάσκει καὶ σέ, G Poemen 65. Cf. also G Motios 1 and Pistos, and more generally, G Epiphanius 4, Eulogius and Poemen 53.

visible example of holy men was, in other words, accepted as a method of instruction no less forceful than their wisdom and spiritual insight.¹

Such is the outward pattern of consultation and instruction described by the eastern literature. Much more is revealed when one inquires how such faith was justified by the men who displayed it. They were convinced, first of all, that their leaders belonged to an historical tradition. It was this that marked them out as orthodox in their opinion, and worthy of the command which they exercised. They belonged, moreover, to a religious group whose place could be clearly identified in the history of the Church—indeed in the longer and more general history of God's dealing with mankind.² Pachomius was seen by a later generation as a descendant of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, as were all those who followed his pattern of life.³ They also possessed a more personal pedigree: they were themselves the disciples of holy men; and the links between one generation and another were traced with care.⁴ They were regarded as having acquired great personal experience. Their questioners and disciples believed that they had undertaken the same programme of self-improvement as themselves, and had encountered and solved similar problems. Conversely, the fathers were reluctant to preach what they had not practised. *Oὐδέποτε ἐποίησα τὸ ἕδιον θέλημα,* said John the Coenobite, *οὐδέ τινα ἐδίδαξα, ὅπερ πρότερον οὐκ ἐποίησα* (a statement which joins together, with remarkable precision, the emphasis on personal experience and the need for historical continuity).⁵ There was a widespread recognition that only intense labour and activity

¹ This was particularly true in the case of Pachomius, *VP* 25 and 50. The point found its way into the *Apophthegmata*—G Psenthaisius.

² The growth of monasticism and the growth of the Church were both seen by the *VP* to have their roots in the same background of persecution and martyrdom, *VP* 1. Monasticism had a recognized place within the visible Church, *VP* 99 and 135. Cf. the prayer of Schenoudi, trans. F. Nau, *Revue de l'Orient chrétien*, xii (1907), p. 325: 'Les églises avec leurs prêtres te loueront, Seigneur, ainsi que les monastères avec leurs anachorètes et le désert avec les solitaires.'

³ *VP* 98. For similar convictions in the West, cf. Jacques Fontaine, 'Une clé littéraire de la *Vita Martini* de Sulpice Sévère: la typologie prophétique', *Mélanges offerts à Mlle Christine Mohrmann* (Utrecht-Anvers, 1963), pp. 84–95; and Cassian, *Conferences*, xviii. 5 and xxi. 30. It was a conviction typical of more coenobitic circles. Pachomius's dream, *VP* 71, reveals his own anxiety about continuity in the community.

⁴ Chitty, *Desert*, pp. 67–8. It was an emphasis particularly common among solitaries, and explains why there are in the *Apophthegmata* so many stories told of holy men by their disciples. Cf. those told by Daniel, G Arsenius 14, 17, 18, 19, 26, 29, 33, 35, 39, 42, 43, Agathon 28, Daniel 6 and 7 and Poemen 138. Poemen himself was a great raconteur in this tradition: cf. G Poemen 44, 47, 52, 55, 65, 70, 74, 75, 79, 82, 85, 87, 96, 101, 125, 137 and 151, as well as many others listed under other fathers.

⁵ G Cassian 5.

could form a reliable basis for personal perfection, and for the wisdom required in the instruction of others. *Ἐργου χρεῖα πνευματικοῦ, ὅτι εἰς τοῦτο ἥλθομεν. Μέγας γάρ κόπος διδάσκειν διὰ τοῦ στόματος, μὴ ποιήσαντες τὸ ἔργον τοῦ σώματος.*¹ It was labour, not learning, that was seen as the mark and mould of the teacher. This conviction was clearly displayed in a famous dialogue between Evagrius and Arsenius.² Evagrius, a man very conscious of his education, anxiously contrasted his own meagre achievements in the spiritual life with the greater virtues of his unlettered fellow-monks. Arsenius voiced the same misgivings, virtually echoing the words of his companion. Yet he managed to imply very forcibly that whatever he and Evagrius possessed in the way of learning they had acquired in a world which was alien to that of the monk, while the virtues of the ἀγροῦκοι sprang from personal initiative and their own hard labour. Arsenius believed that there was little credit in priding oneself on a culture learned by rote at the feet of other men: the monk must concern himself with a fresh creation that was truly his own. Here was an anti-intellectual bias, perhaps—all the more forceful for being expressed with such tact. Yet one of the most remarkable characteristics of ascetical theory in Egypt was this belief that sheer hard work was no impediment to the development of an inner life. The *σωματικὸς κόπος* was taken for granted. Agathon, for example, might appear to emphasize ἡ φυλακὴ τῶν ἔνδον;³ but he was, in the eyes of his companions, not only *σοφὸς ἐν τῷ διανοητικῷ*, but also *ἄοκνος ἐν τῷ σωματικῷ*.⁴ Such a combination, such a breadth of personality, was vital. However vigorous and socially involved his pattern of life might be, it was from his inner purity of heart that a teacher's words would have to flow. For Poemen, the guiding principle was *δίδαξον τὸ στόμα σου λαλεῖν ἀ ἔχει ἡ καρδία σου*.⁵ It was the principle of a whole generation. When Ammoun of Rhaithou suggested to Sisoes, θέλει ὁ λογισμός μου φιλοκαλῆσαι λόγον, ἵνα ἔχω εἰς ἐπερώτημα, the old man replied, with the wisdom of an earlier age, οὐκ ἔστι χρεία· ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἐκ τῆς καθαρότητος τοῦ νοὸς κτῆσαι σεαυτῷ καὶ τὸ ἀμεριμνεῖν καὶ τὸ λέγειν.⁶ This purity of heart enabled the ascetic not only to speak with authority, but also to acquire that spiritual perception which prompted the trust of disciples, and to receive, in addition, visions of a more literal kind.⁷ Pachomius was described by his biographer as

¹ Nau 240. Cf. also G Theodore of Pherme 9, Poemen 25; Nau 252.

² G Arsenius 5. Cf. also G Arsenius 6 and Euprepious 7.

³ G Agathon 8.

⁴ G Agathon 10. Cf. also HL xx, where ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθαι is described as an ἔργον.

⁵ G Poemen 63.

⁶ G Sisoes 17. G Ammoun of Nitria 2 may also refer to Ammoun of Rhaithou (Chitty, *Desert*, p. 79, n. 83), and reflects the same misguided anxiety.

⁷ In addition to the examples which follow, note the terminology of G Jacob 3

ὅρῶν τὸν ἀόρατον θεὸν τῇ καθαρότητι τῆς καρδίας ὡς ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ;¹ and Arsenius made a similar link between the vision of God and the inner life, declaring that, ἐὰν τὸν θεὸν ζητήσωμεν, φανήσεται ἡμῖν· καὶ ἐὰν αὐτὸν κατάσχωμεν, παραμενεῖ ἡμῖν.² Some men showed a certain reticence about visionary experience;³ but it was undoubtedly sought after, and not only by the more solitary or eccentric.⁴ Stories of visions were handed on to future generations, in the same way as sayings of the fathers.⁵ Among them were two concerning the visions of Ephraim, designed to guarantee and to reveal to others a holy man's right to recognition as teacher and guide of the community.⁶ Palladius gives another remarkable instance of this link between vision and authority. Pambo was asked for his opinion on some matter, and concluded his provisional reply with the command, ἐκδέξασθε δὲ ἵνα καὶ παρὰ θεοῦ δέξωμαι τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν. It was only after a few days that he made any definite statement, having the confidence then to say εἶδον, and to speak ὡς ἐπὶ θεοῦ.⁷ The *Apophthegmata* confirm the story, saying of Pambo, οὐ ταχέως λαλεῖ, ἐὰν μὴ πληροφορήσῃ αὐτὸν ὁ θεός.⁸

This brings us to what was regarded as the essential ground for trust in the teaching of the fathers, their supposed inspiration by God. The father needed this inspiration before he could teach: when it was withdrawn, one could only say, ήρεν ὁ θεὸς τὴν χάριν τοῦ λόγου ἀπὸ τῶν

(in the context of inspiration): ὁ φόβος τοῦ θεοῦ, διὰν ἔλθη εἰς καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου, φωτίζει αὐτὸν. The extract is probably late: Jacob tells a story about Mateos (Mattoes 7), who was himself a post-Scetis figure. *VP* 126, however, has the same idea: σαρκικὸν φρόνημα ἔχων καὶ μὴ πυρωθεὶς . . . τῷ λογίῳ τοῦ θεοῦ. Cf. also G Arsenius 27, Isaac of Thebes 2; Nau 163.

¹ *VP* 22. The phrase ὡς ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ recurs in Nau 134: looking at the still surface of water in a vessel (a model of the desert peace), θεωροῦσιν ὡς ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ τὰ πρόσωπα αὐτῶν (a parable of the self-knowledge gained by the hermit).

² G Arsenius 10. Cf. also G Daniel 8: καὶ εἴ τι ἀτεῖ τῷ θεῷ, ἀποκαλύπτει αὐτῷ.

³ G Antony 2, Arsenius 27, Zacharias 5, Tithoes 1; *VP* 88.

⁴ Pachomius had some misgivings about visions, Chitty, *Desert*, p. 28; but in the same chapter, *VP* 48, he admitted charisms of more than ordinary perception. G Serapion 3 advocates the same reverent concentration on God's presence (cf. p. 392, n. 2, below). For less sophisticated desires, cf. G. Antony 12, Silvanus 3; Nau 173, 190 (and for the background here, Rudolf Arbesmann, 'Fasting and prophecy in pagan and Christian antiquity', *Traditio*, vii (1949-51), 1-71).

⁵ G Arsenius 33, Theodore of Pherme 25; *VP* 125.

⁶ G Ephraim 1 and 2. In the latter, one of the elders dreamt that Ephraim was given a book by angels (an interesting comment on the background to Pachomius's supposed vision, *HL* xxxii); καὶ ἀναστὰς πρῶτος, ἤκουσε τοῦ Ἐφραΐμ ὡσπερ πηγὴν βρύσουσαν ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ καὶ ουνάσσοντος, καὶ ἔγνω δι τοῦ πνεύματος ἀγίου ἐστὶ τὰ ἐκπορευόμενα διὰ χειλέων Ἐφραΐμ. Nau 177, 179 and 180 provide other examples of the social use to which the visionary charism might be put.

⁷ *HL* xiv; the same phrase occurs in *HL* x, also referring to Pambo.

⁸ G Pambo 2.

*γερόντων.*¹ This intimate relationship with God and dependence upon him did more than anything else to give the experienced ascetic a permanent standing in the eyes of men. So Pambo, travelling with other ascetics, could demand of laymen by the roadside that they greet them with reverence: *συνεχῶς γὰρ τῷ θεῷ λαλοῦσι, καὶ τὰ στόματα αὐτῶν ἀγιά ἔστιν.*² Such confidence aroused resentment and suspicion, no less than reverence and awe. It is significant that one of the most forceful declarations of this belief in God's inspiration should come from Pachomius, defending himself in A.D. 345 at the synod of Latopolis.³ The point at issue there was precisely his spiritual discernment; and he laid claim to it without fear as *τὸ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ*. It had, he admitted, a human basis, namely man's understandable familiarity with those among whom he lived. That such a natural gift should be intensified in some, and raised to a spiritual level, did no more than reflect the providence of God, and his desire to save all men. Some he would choose as his special instruments, singled out not so much by quality of character as by their accidental association with those most in need of their help. To these chosen men he gave exceptional gifts of judgement and insight. Anyone who strove to do God's will, Pachomius asserted, and to help his fellow men, had after all the scriptural promise of God himself that he would dwell within him.

It is the life of Pachomius, too, that provides us with the best and most complete example of a man possessing all these qualities of leadership. Theodore, his eventual successor, had precisely the personality that commanded the respect of others; and it was based on exactly the attributes we have outlined above. Several years after the death of Pachomius, Orsisius was forced to resign as leader of the communities; and Theodore took his place. Those who had supported Theodore's claims (*οἱ ἐξ ἀρχῆς γινώσκοντες αὐτόν*) rejoiced at this vindication of their long-standing conviction that, because of his filial devotion to Pachomius his master, Theodore had virtually inherited the role of leader. He was, in other words, the embodiment of an orthodox tradition.⁴ He had allowed himself to be formed in the spiritual life by the example of the whole community;⁵ but much more effective had been his imitation of

¹ G Felix. Cf. also G Macarius Aeg. 25. For the link between these two texts, cf. Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, p. 80, n. 3. G Bessarion 4 and VP 66 make the same point.

² G Pambo 7.

³ VP 112.

⁴ A further reason for their acceptance was *ὅτι ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ χάριν είχεν καὶ ἴων φυχῆς ἐν θλίψει*, VP 130. For the fuller significance of this 'comeback', cf. Derwas Chitty, 'A note on the chronology of the Pachomian foundations', *Studia Patristica*, ii (Berlin, 1957), 384.

⁵ VP 36, for this and most of what follows.

Pachomius himself, whom he obeyed as a representative of God.¹ Prayer and work had been the basis of his life, bringing him both purity of heart and the gift of speech.² He achieved, moreover, a personal sanctity far beyond the norm, ἀγωνιζόμενος τὰ μείζονα χαρίσματα κτησάθαι. Because of these elements in his background and character, Pachomius recognized in him the potential ruler of the communities he had founded, and eventually proclaimed in public Theodore's right to that position.³

This concern with historical tradition as a basis of authority, together with a certain emphasis on the value of experience, purity of heart, insight and inspiration, appears also in the western sources. Yet it would be a mistake to think that the transplanting, so to speak, of such attitudes to the West represented a move to a markedly different environment. Between the career of Pachomius and the death of Martin of Tours, eastern asceticism itself underwent three important changes, which affected the concept of authority, as well as patterns of organization: ascetics became more united among themselves, and more involved with the clergy and the pastoral Church; and they developed a literature of their own. Every western ascetic of that same period, whether bishop or not, took all three features for granted; and they therefore need to be described with some care.

Holy men in Egypt did not teach their disciples in complete isolation, as remote oracles in the desert.⁴ Nor were those who questioned them engaged in a merely chance encounter, as if they had no further concern, beyond the moment of dialogue, either with the holy men themselves, or with their fellow-inquirers. A process of greater social involvement began almost immediately, with the gathering around the holy man of

¹ Cf. also *VP* 50. Pachomius regarded his own advice as a reflection of τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, *VP* 42 and 69.

² On another occasion, Theodore's interpretation of Scripture to the community is described in the words, καὶ ἡρξατο λαλεῖν ἀ δόκιμος ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ; and Pachomius displayed the same attitude with his subsequent question, ηκούσατε τὰ εἰρημένα· τίνος ἐστίν; μή τοῦ λαλοῦντος ἡ τοῦ Κυρίου; *VP* 77.

³ *VP* 91.

⁴ There were, for one thing, rivalries between them. Ammoun of Nitria wished to know why Antony was more famous—after all, ἐγώ πλειόνα σου κόπον ἔχω. Antony makes the devastating reply, ἐπειδὴ ἐγώ ἀγαπῶ τὸν θεὸν ὑπὲρ σέ G Ammoun of Nitria 1. For one interpretation of this piece, cf. Chitty, *Desert*, p. 32; but the dispute may also concern, for a later generation, the question of which 'ancestral figure' they should appeal to: cf. *VP* 120, where Antony resists an attempt to make him πατὴρ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου φῶς, thus favouring the 'alternative hero', Pachomius. The same anxiety is found in the West: cf. Cassian, 'Necessere est unquamquam viam ad illum finem suum pertrahere sectatorem, ad quem auctor ipsius inventorque pervenit', *Conferences*, xviii. 4. Immediate rivalry was common enough for Poemen to be noted as one who avoided such embarrassments, G Poemen 4 and 105. G Theodore of Eleutheropolis 2, and Nau 174, are good examples of the trouble that could arise.

a small group of disciples.¹ This process is, indeed, reflected in the three types of consultation already mentioned. In the first instance, a questioner would come, probably on some isolated occasion, to appeal in most general terms to the father's spiritual wisdom. This approach did not demand a more permanent relationship between them.² Subsequently, questioners sought for more detailed advice; and this would have required, no doubt, a lengthy revelation of their state of soul, and possibly longer acquaintance and deeper knowledge on the part of the father.³ Once a young man had found a mentor suited to his taste,⁴ he would stay in his company for a considerable time, even until death.⁵ Eventually, therefore, an additional and increasing dependence on the example rather than the word of the holy man led to the development of stable religious communities.⁶

There are certainly signs that *τὸ χάρισμα τοῦ λόγου* underwent a decline as the century proceeded, and that example acquired increasing importance in the later stages of the ascetical movement. Taken by itself, the growing unwillingness or inability to make oracular statements did not inevitably undermine the social function of the holy man. He now took upon himself the equally impressive role of intercessor before God. Unable to offer his inquirers the traditional word of wisdom, the father was more and more frequently faced with the request, *εὐξαι ὑπὲρ ημῶν*.⁷

¹ The terminology is revealing: *οἱ καθήμενοι ἐγγὺς αὐτοῦ*, G Poemen 3. Cf. G Poemen 4 and *HL* xxxv.

² That such questions arose most at the beginning of the individual ascetic's career, if not exclusively in the earlier period of monasticism, is suggested by G Antony 1 and Arsenius 1, where they are addressed to God (a human director being unavailable?).

³ Elders could outline general principles, and then apply them at a more particular level, G Joseph of Panephysis 3, Joseph of Thebes, Cyrus, Macarius Aeg. 3 and Poemen 62. The elder's knowledge of the individual before him is sometimes mentioned specifically, G Ares, Poemen 22 and 27, Pambo 3 (although here Pambo depended on the report of others), Paphnutius 2, Serapion 2. For such consultation involving closer ties, cf. G Ammoes 1, John Colobos 8. G Poemen 183 says that *δὸς λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ* needs to be applied to the soul again and again. For a particularly beautiful example of patience and availability, cf. Nau 164; the theoretical insight behind such patience is revealed in G John Colobos 18: the *ἀββᾶς* is a lamp undiminished by giving light to others.

⁴ Many were critical, and travelled from one *ἀββᾶς* to another, G Agathon 28, Poemen 4, 88, 89, 97, 98; Nau 216, 217, 245.

⁵ G Arsenius 32, Gelasius 1; Nau 190.

⁶ For an unusually full picture of life in these small groups, cf. Nau 211.

⁷ This role had been rejected in an earlier age, e.g. G Antony 16; but cf. G Pambo 2, The Roman 1, Felix; Nau 170. The dating of the letters to Paphnutius, published by H. Idris Bell, *Jews and Christians in Egypt* (British Museum, 1924), is necessarily vague. They represent, in any case, a different situation, in which the request for prayers does not follow as an alternative to a request for advice that had failed to gain a response. Nau 169 reveals a certain overlapping

Nevertheless, an increasing emphasis on example would have seemed strange to many of an earlier generation. Macarius the Egyptian, for instance, was seriously perturbed when visitors showed more interest in his pattern of life than in revealing to him their λογισμοί.¹ It would be unwise to place the change of emphasis too early. It was still accepted at the time of Evagrius that more could be gained from the words of a holy man, even when recounted at second hand, than from direct acquaintance with his visible pattern of life.² But the prologue to the *Apophthegmata*, in a passage which may well reflect the attitude of the early fifth century, refers to the ἐνάρετος ἀσκησις καὶ θαυμαστὴ βίου διαγωγὴ before mentioning the ρήσεις ἀγίων καὶ μακαρίων πατέρων.³ One can detect in the *Vita Prima* similar suggestions at the expense of charismatic teaching,⁴ and in this respect the book would have reproduced the opinion of late fourth-century compilers, more than that of Pachomius himself. Those who gathered around the great pioneer, attracted by his virtue, are described in the *Vita* as ἀκοῦσαντες, μᾶλλον δὲ ὅρωντες.⁵ In his account of Pachomius' famous vision of an angel, Palladius may have been drawing upon a more historical tradition, accurate in the attitudes it reflected, if not in the details of fact.⁶ The words of the angel suggest that among the Pachomian communities a link had been made between example and a regulated pattern of life: καὶ κατὰ τὸν τύπον ὃν δίδωμι σοι οὕτως ἀντοῖς νομοθέτησον.⁷ It was no accident, therefore, that in the *Vita Prima* itself the Rule was described as a τύπος, firmly linked with the words of Scripture, which were themselves the fundamental source for more charismatic teaching.⁸

It is not only this dependence on the force of example that points to the development of a more social asceticism. Equally important are the many indications of greater stability, not only in those writings which would seem more directly concerned with the coenobitic life, but also in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. These last give, it is true, an impression of

of the charismatic and intercessory roles: Κύριε ἀποκάλυψόν μοι τὸ κάθισμα τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ τούτου. Orsius faced the same difficulty, and followed the advice of Pachomius himself, καν οὐπω ἔλαβες πολλὴν τὴν γνῶσιν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλ' εἰπὲ αὐτοῖς παραβολὴν, καὶ ὁ θεός ἐνεργεῖ αὐτήν, *VP* 118.

¹ G Macarius Aeg. 33.

² *HL* xxxv.

³ *PG* lxv. 72A. For the dating of this passage, cf. Guy, *Recherches*, p. 199.

⁴ The description of Pachomius's rule, for example, *VP* 25; and Theodore's dependence on Pachomius's example, *VP* 50.

⁵ *VP* 14; cf. also ἡμᾶς τοὺς τε ἔχοντας σκοπόν, *VP* 20.

⁶ On this text (*HL* xxxii), cf. Armand Veilleux, *La Liturgie dans le cénobitisme pachomien au quatrième siècle* (Rome, 1968), pp. 139 sqq.

⁷ *HL* xxxii.

⁸ *VP* 25.

considerable mobility.¹ Even in the time of Agathon, when the grouping of disciples around a holy man was accepted as a normal feature of the ascetical life, monks were still regarded as ἀκάθιστοι, predominantly rootless men. This rootlessness was defended at a theoretical level: *Μακάριοι οἱ τοιοῦτοι ὅτι διὰ τὸν θεόν μετέβησαν, καὶ πάντων κατεφρόνησαν.*² The place where one lived at any particular time could be regarded as suitable only for this or that type of ascesis. Any change in one's programme, any step forward in the spiritual life, might well demand a literal move to some other place.³ Agathon, abandoning a cell which had, with great labour, only just been built, gave his weary disciples what he regarded as reasonable advice—πλὴν ὁ θέλων ἐλθεῖν, ἔλθῃ.⁴ For some ascetics, at least, the ξένος μοναχός, the wanderer, was endowed with greater virtue than those more settled.⁵ The important thing to notice, however, is the interpretation put upon this mobility by a later generation. They assumed that the ἀρχαῖοι allowed it for three reasons only: if they were gaining too much praise in any place, too great a reputation; if their neighbours had something against them that could not be resolved; and if they were tempted there to fornication.⁶ All three reasons concern social relationships, and betray the assumptions of men who had begun to feel the burdens of stability.

As in the case of example, a change of outlook with regard to stability became apparent even while less settled patterns of life were still fashionable. Antony himself was said to have given the advice, ἐν οἷῳ δὲ καθέξῃ τόπῳ, μὴ ταχέως κινοῦ.⁷ The famous exhortation *κάθου εἰς τὸ κελλίον σου*⁸ was delivered to Macarius at an equally early stage; and it is interesting to notice, in this case, how the solitude of a cell was already being contrasted with the real solitude of the desert.⁹ Nor was it enough merely to sit in one's cell. For Poemen, τὸ ἐν τῷ κελλίῳ καθίσαι was merely τὸ φανερόν: his concern was much more with τὸ δὲ ἐν κρυπτῷ προκόπτειν εἰς τὸ κελλίον.¹⁰ The point is well illustrated in the biography of Eulogius. He was accustomed to wander about with a small band of disciples; but when he visited Joseph of Panephysis and his more settled group, he too became an οἰκονομικός, καὶ ἔμαθε καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ ἐργάζεσθαι.¹¹ By this time it was the human heart itself that had become a cell in the most proper sense. Ammonas could say in one breath (speaking, again, to Poemen), *ὑπαγε, κάθου εἰς τὸ κελλίον σου, καὶ θὲς εἰς τὴν καρδίαν σου, ὅτι*

¹ e.g., G Arsenius 25, John Colobos 17, Milesius 2, Nisteroos 1, Poemen 26. Even demons could call a monk ξένος, G Macarius Aeg. 13.

² G Agathon 6. ³ Nau 247. ⁴ G Agathon 6. ⁵ Nau 250.

⁶ Nau 194. ⁷ G Antony 3. ⁸ G Biare 1, Moses 6; Nau 195, 202.

⁹ G Macarius Aeg. 2. ¹⁰ G Poemen 168.

¹¹ G Eulogius. Cp. this with the *κεκρυμμένος σκόπος* of Nathanael, *HL* xvi. Cf. also Nau 257.

ἥδη ἔχεις ἐνιαυτὸν ἐν τῷ μνήματι.¹ A similar conviction lay behind the remarkable statement, ἡ κέλλα τοῦ μοναχοῦ ἔστιν ἡ κάμινος βαβυλώνος, ὅπου οἱ τρεῖς πᾶνδες τὸν ὑιὸν τοῦ θεοῦ εὑρον, καὶ ὁ στύλος τῆς νεφέλης, ὅθεν ὁ θεὸς τῷ Μωϋσῇ ἐλάλησεν.² There was, in other words, a connection between more settled patterns of life and an increasingly interior emphasis in ascetical spirituality. It is worth quoting fully in this context a statement attributed to Macarius. 'Ἐὰν μνησθῶμεν τῶν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπαγομένων ἡμῖν κακῶν, ἀναιροῦμεν τὴν δύναμιν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ μνήμης. 'Ἐὰν δὲ μνησθῶμεν τῶν κακῶν τῶν δαιμόνων, ἐσόμεθα ἄτρωτοι.'³ These are, on the surface, the words of one conscious of his literal withdrawal, of his tenuous links with other men. Intercourse with one's fellows is seen as a possible distraction from God himself. Yet an interior concern with demonic forces is not rejected—indeed, it is regarded as a possible source of spiritual strength.⁴ This readiness to accept interior conflict persisted into the later period. Certainly, when a more social emphasis had become acceptable, closer involvement with other people caused difficulties and strain; but these became interiorized, in the same way as more obviously demonic conflicts and temptations; and they were examined and resolved essentially in private. Dying to others, for example, a basic requirement in the solitary ascetic, became very much an inner disposition, quite compatible with proximity to other men. 'Ἐὰν μὴ θήσει ἀνθρωπος ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἐαυτὸν ἥδη τριήμερον ἐν μνημειῷ, οὐ φθάνει εἰς τὸν λόγον τοῦτον.'⁵ We shall be in no way surprised, then, by the obscurity which marked (for their biographers) the inner lives of Martin and Augustine.⁶ It was no more than a sign that, although their

¹ G Poemen 2.

² Nau 206.

³ G Macarius Aeg. 36. Cp. the opinion of Arsenius, οὐ δύναμαι εἶναι μετὰ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, G Arsenius 13. His anxiety, too, centres on an interior effect: οἱ δὲ ἀνθρώποι πολλὰ θελήματα ἔχονται.

⁴ A.-J. Festugière gives a very critical interpretation of ascetical attitudes in this respect, *Les moines d'Orient*, I, *Culture ou sainteté* (Paris, 1961), esp. pp. 34–9; but his presentation of this feature in Egyptian monasticism is a little unjust, being based (as far as the fourth century is concerned) very largely on the *Historia Monachorum*. Cf. Chitty, *Desert*, p. 3, and Arthur Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*, II (Louvain, 1960), p. 135. By the time of Chalcedon, the interior impact of demons was fully recognized: cf. G Phocas 1, πολλὰ δὲ ἔλεγε πεποθέναι . . . ὑπὸ τῶν δαιμόνων, μάλιστα κατὰ διάνοιαν. VP 87, and Cassian, *Conferences*, vii. 12–15, represent intermediate positions in the development of this conviction.

⁵ G Moses 12. The words τριήμερον ἐν μνημειῷ hint at a theology of 'death in conversion', implying the prospect of a new life to follow, a new pattern of relationships, rather than an absence of any relationship. Cp. G Alonios 1: 'Ἐὰν μὴ εἴπῃ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἀνθρωπος, ὅτι Ἐγὼ μόνος καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐσμέν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, οὐκ ἔξει ἀνάπανων. (In Cassian, *Conferences*, iv. 3, temptations come from either oneself, the devil or God.)

⁶ Possidius, *Vita di S. Agostino*, ed. Michele Pellegrino (Alba, 1955)

asceticism was inspired by traditional patterns, their careers had called for ever greater social involvement.

This particular change in the development of fourth-century Egyptian asceticism is vividly illustrated by a shift in the meaning of *ξενιτεία*. Taken literally, of course, the word implies a certain mobility, a certain isolation from that which is familiar. Yet in the texts we find its equivalent joined with the notion of stability: ἔχε φρόνημα παροίκου ἐν τῷ τόπῳ φιλοκατοικεῖς.¹ We see it mentioned in the same breath as interiority. Agathon would warn his questioners not to move from place to place, seeking a locality best suited to their virtue. They should, he said, develop an interior strength that would survive anywhere.² Restlessness would bring no respite: ὅπου ἐὰν ἀπέλθης εὐρίσκεις ἐμπροσθέν σου διφεύγεις.³ *Ξενιτεία* became associated, also, with a gradual disengagement, a gradual increase in the value placed upon privacy. Sisoes, now at Clysma, gave this late definition of *ξενιτεία*: Σιώπα, καὶ εἰπέ· Οὐκ ἔχω πρᾶγμα ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ ὅπου ἐὰν ἀπέρχῃ.⁴ Agathon went so far as to include *ξενιτεία* among those virtues demanded precisely by the coenobitic life.⁵ Poemen gave the assurance ἐὰν κρατήσῃ μοναχὸς τὴν κοιλίαν καὶ τὴν γλώσσαν, καὶ τὴν ξενιτείαν, θάρσει, οὐκ ἀποθνήσκει.⁶ One could no longer regard *ξενιτεία*, he thought, as an end in itself: it was an inclination common to ascetics, which needed to be controlled, and directed to a useful purpose. By the middle of the fifth century, the change of meaning was complete. When Longinus expressed the desire, θέλω ξενιτεῦσαι, Lucius replied with the warning, ἐὰν μὴ κρατήσῃς τῆς γλώσσης σου, οὐκ εἰ ξένος, ὅπου ἐὰν ἀπέλθῃς. He made a similar point about fasting; and then, in reply to Longinus' final request, θέλω φυγεῖν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, he connected this whole process of interiorization with an emphasis on the value of community life: ἐὰν μὴ πρῶτον κατορθώσῃς μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὅδè καταμόνας δύνασαι κατορθώσαι.⁷

An increasing stability, therefore, an increasing concentration on the interior life and its essential privacy: these were characteristic of the specifically social development of Egyptian monasticism. No less important was the increase in formality. This in itself betrayed the growing complexity of relationships among ascetics, a growing sense that they had to define the extent to which they could encroach upon each other.⁸

(= *V Aug*), Preface, 5–7; Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Sancti Martini*, ed. Jacques Fontaine, *Vie* 1 (= *VM*), i. 7 and xxvi. 2.

¹ Poemen S 4 (Guy, *Recherches*, p. 30).

² G Agathon 13.

³ Nau 200. Cf. also *HL*, Preface.

⁴ G Pistros.

⁵ G Agathon 1.

⁶ G Poemen 62.

⁷ G Longinus 1.

⁸ When Antony hears from God (standing here in the place of the ἄββᾶς) that some things must remain *κρίματα θεοῦ . . . καὶ οὐ συμφέρει σοι αὐτὰ μαθεῖν*, we see defined the limits of discipleship—how far one might penetrate the mind of one's master, G Antony 2.

It is a feature which appears in all the sources, whether referring to coenobitic or to more solitary patterns of asceticism.¹ The loosely defined group of master and disciples becomes a more rigid framework, in which every individual has his appointed place. Ἀνθρωπος ἐὰν τὴν τάξιν αὐτοῦ φυλάττῃ, said Poemen, οὐ ταράσσεται.² It was taken for granted that a holy man's disciples would also be in some sense his servants.³ This created, in fact, a relationship involving more tenderness and humanity than hardship.⁴ Even Ammoes, who had been a hard master to John of Thebes for many years, paid him, while dying, the memorable compliment, οὗτος ἄγγελός ἔστι, καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρωπος.⁵ Nevertheless there was great consternation at any attempt to reverse or undermine the appointed roles of master and disciple, even when this was done through the humility of the older man.⁶ Poemen's willingness to call the young Agathon ἀββᾶ—δτι τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ἐποίησεν αὐτὸν καλεῖσθαι ἀββᾶν—was noted with surprise as an exception, to be recounted at second hand for the admiration of a later generation.⁷ Already during the lifetime of Pachomius, members of his community found it hard to accept the authority of a younger man.⁸ As the community structure grew more formal in this way, so authority was considered to demand above all obedience.⁹ Fathers would test their disciples with extreme and even ridiculous commands;¹⁰ and the trust with which their commands were accepted shows that their authority was regarded still as charismatic in character.¹¹ The community which had gathered around Silvanus was

¹ P. Suso Frank, 'Gehorsam und Freiheit im frühen Mönchtum', *Römische Quartalschrift*, Ixiv (1969), pp. 234–45.

² G Poemen 167.

³ Especially in the case of Arsenius: G Arsenius 3, 17, 20, 21; but also e.g. G Silvanus 4; Nau 149, 151.

⁴ G Arsenius 32, Macarius Aeg. 1 and 9; G Macarius Aeg. 1 may provide a clue as to how these relationships began.

⁵ G John of Thebes.

⁶ When Moses asked young Zacharias the traditional question, εἰπέ μοι τί ποιήσω, ἀκούσας δὲ ἐρώψεν ἑαντὸν χαμαὶ (and cp. here G Anoub 1) εἰς τὸν πόδας αὐτοῦ, G Zacharias 3. Cf. also G The Roman 2, Zacharias 1; VP 24.

⁷ G Poemen 61.

⁸ VP 77. Nevertheless age was not always an inevitable requirement: μὴ νομίσῃς δτι τῶν ἀρχαίων ἐστὶν μόνον ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, VP 119. Cf. also G Zacharias 1, Carion 1; Nau 246; and Ambrose's comment on the suitability of Simplicianus as a successor, 'Senex, sed bonus', Paulinus of Milan, *Vita beati Ambrosii*, ed. Michele Pellegrino (Rome, 1961) (= VA), 46.

⁹ G Pambo 3 is particularly forceful. The emphasis is further illustrated by formal patterns of penance and reconciliation, Nau 179, 186.

¹⁰ G Joseph of Panephysis 5, Sisoës 10.

¹¹ ποίω λογισμῷ ἐλεγέ μοι ὁ γέρων,—the implication being that there must be some reason, G Joseph of Panephysis 5. Cf. Cassian, *Institutes*, ed. Jean-Claude Guy (Paris, 1965), iv. 24 sq., which places love above reason: fear, the opposite of love, springs from the suspicion of irrationality. Cf. *Institutes*, iv. 39 sq., and Chitty, *Desert*, p. 52.

particularly conscious of the importance of obedience, for reasons theological as well as practical. Mark, for example, the most virtuous among them in this respect, was thought to obey Silvanus with such promptness because he was so much loved by God.¹ Mios, who had once been a slave, showed a similarly reflective bent, when he said to his former masters, ὅμολογῶ ὅτι δοῦλος ὑμῶν εἰμι· καὶ εὐχαριστῶν ὅτι ἀφήκατέ με ἐλεύθερον δουλεύειν τῷ θεῷ.² Yet even Mark could imagine commands that he might not be able to obey. When his mother came and asked to see him, Mark implored Silvanus not to press him a second time to agree to her demand.³ He did not wish to offend against what were now considered as the official standards of the group. The freedom of the old order had not passed away completely. Advising a man who had already gathered a group of disciples about him, Poemen vigorously argued against any rigid authority: γενοῦ ἀύτοῖς τύπος, καὶ μὴ νομοθέτης.⁴ When Anoub set up a new community with his brothers, after the devastation of Scetis, he demanded their obedience, and imposed on them a common life; but it was the charismatic quality of Anoub's example and teaching that bound them together.⁵ Pachomius himself was anxious that those who governed his communities should be δυνατοὶ τῷ πνεύματι.⁶ When he formally proclaimed Theodore as his delegate, endowed with full authority, he used the terminology commonly applied to the charismatic holy man.⁷ Pachomius admitted that community superiors were compelled to make known their wishes by means of mundane and *ad hoc* commands; but these, no less than the pithy λόγοι of the desert fathers were to be taken as revelations of God's will.⁸ So when Palladius came to write the *Lausiac History*, he could still explain the title ἀμμᾶς, even in the ordered context of a Pachomian monastery, with the words, οὕτως γὰρ καλοῦσι τὰς πνευματικάς.⁹

The spiritual authority of Egyptian ascetics, therefore, was exercised within a society; and as this society changed, and became more stable, more clearly defined, so the concept of authority changed with it. But, if we wish to compare this eastern situation with the West, it is even more important to take note of a growing involvement among eastern ascetics

¹ G Mark 1. The ὅτι is important, in the phrase καὶ ὅτι ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ἀγαπᾷ. If it were omitted (as some Greek manuscripts prefer), the phrase would mean that God loved Mark because of his obedience: the accepted reading implies that Mark's ability to obey is a sign that God loves him already. A tendency to theorize is not confined to the *Apophthegmata*, but suggested also by the popularity and the writings of Evagrius; cf. William Seston, 'Remarques sur le rôle de la pensée d'Origène dans les origines du monachisme', *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, cviii (1933), p. 200.

² G Mios 2.

³ G Mark 3.

⁴ G Poemen 174.

⁵ G Anoub 1.

⁶ VP, 54.

⁷ καὶ ἔχει τὴν ἔξουσίαν καὶ αὐτὸς διατάξαι ὡς πατήρ, VP 91.

⁸ VP 89.

⁹ HL xxxiv.

with the structures of the pastoral Church. The apostolic concern shown by Pachomius and his early associates seems to have made them particularly prone to such involvement.¹ Antony praised Pachomius, and approved of his new experiment in community living, precisely because it represented a desire θρέψαι ἄλλας ψυχάς.² Pachomius's first experience of Christianity had been of a selfless concern for the welfare of others. Its followers were described to him as πᾶν ἀγαθὸν πᾶσι ποιοῦντες;³ and in his first prayer to his new God Pachomius responded in similar terms: πάντας τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀγαπῶν, δούλεύσω αὐτοῖς κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν σου.⁴ Palamon, his first instructor in asceticism, had given Pachomius a similar example, making the habitual prayer that God might rescue both himself and all men from the tyranny of evil.⁵ For the writer of the *Vita Prima*, at least, the change of life, the conversion, which properly marked the beginning of an ascetical career, was also closely linked with the idea of conversion to the Church.⁶ These apostolic emphases in the Pachomian sources seem to contrast with a certain reluctance betrayed by the *Apophthegmata*. The desert fathers' attitude to laymen, and to outsiders in general, seems accurately summed up in Arsenius's retort to the rich lady from Rome: εὐχομαὶ τῷ θεῷ, ἵνα ἔξαλειφθῇ τὸ μημόσυνόν σου ἐκ τῆς καρδίας μου.⁷ It is perhaps fair to add that this brutal manner was most often directed against what the fathers regarded as appeals for the wrong kind of help; appeals which did not, in other words, reflect the docile faith that marked the true disciple.⁸ In any case, this contrast between Pachomius and the *Apophthegmata* is weakened by reference to a wider range of evidence. The apostolic concern which seems to have been present in the early coenobitic communities was restricted to those who were willing to involve themselves formally in the practice of asceticism. Statements in the *Vita Prima* such as, τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ ἔστιν τὸ διακονεῖν τῷ γένει τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἀποκαταλλάσσειν αὐτοὺς αὐτῷ, clearly refer to the formation of religious communities in a stricter

¹ For many valuable comments on this whole matter, cf. Veilleux, *Liturgie*, especially the sections on 'Le monastère-église' and 'Relations de la Koinonia monastique avec la hiérarchie ecclésiastique', pp. 181–95. He regards liturgy as particularly important, because in the liturgical context the roles of prophet and priest fuse together without becoming juridical. The theme is usefully summed up on p. 233.

² VP 120.

³ VP 4.

⁴ VP 5. The theology behind this insight (based on Matt. xxv. 31–46 and Acts ix. 4–5) would also inspire Martin of Tours: cf. below, p. 405, n. 1.

⁵ VP 11.

⁶ VP 2.

⁷ G Arsenius 28. Cf. also G Arsenius 31; *HL* x and lviii. I am leaving aside here the whole question of their less spiritual relations with the outside world, such as those revealed at the economic level by G Isaac of the Cells 4, Macarius Aeg. 7 and 14, Mios 2; Nau 175, 179, 258, 261, 263: cf. Chitty, *Desert*, p. 34.

⁸ G Daniel 3, Poemen 3 and 7, Sisoës 18.

sense.¹ Pachomius reiterated, towards the end of his life, his conviction that the gathering of souls to God could only be effectively achieved within the *κοινωνία*.² Passages in the *Apophthegmata* place Antony's praise of Pachomius more in perspective. He appears there, too, as an apostolic and outward-going man. Yet, when the texts are carefully examined, his generosity and patience, as well as his more theoretical statements about the brotherhood of men, are seen to concern most of all those already engaged in the ascetical life.³ The fathers' unwillingness to take note of a wider audience proved their keen awareness that they formed a definite group, with its own aims, its own problems and, not least of all, its own standards. We must be willing to credit them, moreover, with a certain humility. The prologue to the *Apophthegmata* mentions this as typical of the fathers;⁴ and many of the anecdotes make the same point.⁵ This may explain why Arsenius rejected so brusquely the visit of the patriarch Theophilus.⁶ Pambo was supposed to have done the same with his famous remark, *εἰ οὐκ ὥφελεῖται ἐν τῇ σιωπῇ μου, οὐδὲ ἐν τῷ λόγῳ μου ὥφεληθῆναι ἔχει.*⁷ He was making the important point that Theophilus had not come to him with the attitudes and aims of a disciple. There are several such examples of fathers who rejected mere curiosity in those who came to see them.⁸ Other anecdotes, however, reveal that when a visitor was already a member of the ascetical group, and when he had already identified himself with those who truly sought perfection, then such a desire simply to see the holy man, and to appeal to his intercessory powers, was perfectly acceptable.⁹ The breakdown of this group mentality, and the weakening of this reluctance to exercise spiritual influence further afield, was a vital feature of subsequent monastic history.

Such a change can be seen to have taken place when ascetics undertake roles typical of the clergy who governed and administered the Church as a whole. It is seen, first of all, in the proliferation of *πρεσβύτεροι*

¹ *VP* 23.

² *VP* 136.

³ He journeys to see an ascetic, G Antony 15; he receives a man expelled from a *κοινόβιον*, G Antony 21; and the *ἀσθενεῖς* for whom he shows concern are by implication ascetics, G Antony 23. On brotherhood, cf. G Antony 9: *ἔὰν γὰρ κερδήσωμεν τὸν ἀδελφὸν, τὸν θεὸν κερδάνομεν*—*ἀδελφός* being consistently used to refer to ascetics.

⁴ *PG* lxv. 72A–73A.

⁵ e.g., G Arsenius 31, Zeno 1, Moses 8, Nisteros 1.

⁶ *ὅπου ἔὰν ἀκούσῃτε Ἀρσένιον, μὴ πλησιάσῃτε*, G Arsenius 7. G Theophilus 5 shows that the patriarch continued, nevertheless, to hold Arsenius in high esteem.

⁷ G Theophilus 2. It could not have been Pambo in fact, Chitty, *Desert*, p. 56; and, since Pambo shows a quite different attitude in Pambo 4, Theophilus 2 may reflect much later opinion on the matter.

⁸ G Moses 8, Poemen 5, Simon 1 and 2.

⁹ G Macarius Aeg. 4, 33, 34, Poemen 6.

among the ascetical communities.¹ It is hard to decide what was their precise function. They may have ministered, like Macarius the Egyptian, to the purely material needs of their colleagues;² but there were also those who exercised liturgical duties quite independent of their personal sanctity or capacity for leadership.³ Dorotheus, the presbyter at Antinoe, probably represents the norm: he combined these sacred and material duties in the service of the solitaries who lived nearby.⁴ Macarius of Alexandria, described by Palladius as a presbyter in the Cells, certainly celebrated the Eucharist, and at the same time possessed sufficient authority and self-confidence to rebuke a fellow-priest for his impurity and inordinate love of learning, forcing him in the end to revert to the status of layman.⁵ In Nitria there were, again according to Palladius, eight priests, whose duty it was, not only to celebrate the Eucharist, but also to instruct the monks, and even to pass judgement upon them.⁶

More important than the function of this monastic priesthood was the effect which it had in ascetical society on the concept of spiritual authority. It became at first a support for that authority, and then a substitute for it. Isidore of Scetis provides a good example of what happened at an intermediate stage. His priesthood gave him the greater assurance needed to criticize his colleagues, and to stand apart to some extent from their various patterns of association and discipleship.⁷ In the end, however, those functions which had traditionally been reserved for the spiritual leader endowed with charismatic power were gradually taken over by men whose qualifications were almost entirely clerical. It was clerics, now, who gave spiritual assurance, when famous holy men were no longer able to 'speak the word'.⁸ It was clerics who possessed visionary power;⁹ and the peace of soul which had previously come with hearing the words of the fathers could now be acquired through formal penance, performed in company perhaps more numerous and less familiar than the group of disciples around their spiritual

¹ e.g., G Benjamin 2, Eulogius, Esaias 4, John Colobos 7, Isidore 1, Isaac of the Cells 1 and 8, Carion 2, Matoes 9, Poemen 11 and 44, Pambo 11 (cf. Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, p. 61), Timothy 1.

² *HL* xxv. Cf. also Nau 259.

³ Nau 254.

⁵ *HL* xviii.

⁴ *HL* lviii.

⁶ *HL* vii.

⁷ He gave shelter and hospitality to those rejected by the community, G Isidore 1; and G Poemen 44 shows him leaving a community whose standards had declined. In *HL* xix, he is still exercising a more traditional function. But cf. G Isaac of the Cells 7, where a similar withdrawal was threatened: Isaac, in charge of the ἐκκλησία there (G Isaac of the Cells 8), felt that the more traditional basis of his leadership had become weakened: οὐκ ἔτι παρέχω ὑμῖν ἐντολάς· οὐ φυλάσσετε γάρ.

⁸ G Pambo 2.

⁹ G Esaias 4: εἰδον ἐγώ ἀδελφὸν ἐσθίοντα μεθ' ὑμῶν . . . καὶ ἡ εὐχὴ αὐτοῦ ἀναβάνει ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς τῷ πῦρ.

master.¹ A man's priesthood could play an important part in the attraction of disciples, and in the preservation of the group.² Macarius the Egyptian, one of the pioneers of asceticism, and a typical charismatic leader in the old style,³ experienced many of these changes in his own ascetical career. Not only did he become a priest, but he tried to establish during his lifetime what amounted to a priestly dynasty, handing on his ministry to his disciple John.⁴ The manner in which authority had traditionally been passed down from one generation to the next within the ascetical group had now become confused with the continuity of a clerical system. The process was no less marked in Pachomian circles. By the time he felt able to found a community of women, Pachomius thought it best to place them under the sole authority of a presbyter and a deacon. These were the only men allowed across the river to the women's monastery, and that only on Sundays. Their function extended well beyond the sphere of liturgy. When a dispute arose within the community, the presbyter excommunicated the offender, barring her from the Eucharist, and cutting her off for a long time from the companionship of her sisters.⁵ Pachomius had felt, it is true, that to accept ecclesiastical office was to run the danger of pride;⁶ but he was anxious on this score more for the sake of the community as a whole than for that of the individual. He did not wish to see his subjects afflicted by the divisions and enmity which he could see in the Church of his day; divisions and enmity fomented most, it seemed to him, by clerical interest. His prohibition was directed most against the seeking of office. He regarded the clergy, nevertheless, as truly fathers of the Church; and he foresaw without dismay that individual monks might soon be numbered among them. Provided that they fulfilled their ministry worthily, and restricted themselves to sacred functions, they deserved the obedience and honour traditionally offered to ascetics of senior rank and outstanding sanctity.⁷ It was a short step from this admission to the confusion and later identification of roles which eventually developed.

Acquiring its own clergy in this way might well have made the monastic movement even more independent of the Church as a whole, particularly in the administration of the sacraments.⁸ In fact, the existence

¹ Nau 165: *kai ἐπαύσατο ὁ πόλεμος*. G Bessarion 7 shows that other ascetics would still reject this tendency; and cf. G Bessarion 5, where the traditional holy man is called in to rescue clerics from their incompetence. ² HL xlvi and xlix.

³ G Macarius Aeg. 25, 27, 28 (although this may refer to Macarius Alex., since it is told by a Paphnutius, the name of his disciple, HL xviii) and 41.

⁴ HL xvii. Cassian tells how Paphnutius attempted to do the same with Daniel, 'optansque sibimet successorem dignissimum providere', *Conferences*, iv. 1.

⁵ HL xxxiii.

⁶ Chitty, *Desert*, p. 23.

⁷ VP 27.

⁸ Cp. the ordination of Paulinianus, seen by Jerome, at least, as part of a

of clergy within the ascetical groups drew them more within the orbit of episcopal control. There were a sufficient number of ascetics who were willing to place their charismatic powers at the disposal of the hierarchy, and eventually to co-operate in the broader pastoral duties which their new priestly status seemed to demand of them. Fathers now found themselves under pressure from the clergy to exercise the spiritual powers for which they were so famous.¹ Theophilus of Alexandria would even invite monks to the city, *ἴνα ποιήσωσιν εὐχὴν καὶ καθελῆ τὰ ἴερά*.² Other bishops had already tried, with varying success, to engage ascetics in more long-term projects. As early as A.D. 330, Serapion of Tentyra had expressed the wish to organize the monks of his diocese under the general supervision of Pachomius, whom he had hoped to ordain a priest. Nothing came of this.³ About ten years later, Arius of Panopolis was able to persuade the community at Tabennesis to found another monastery nearer the city. He may have won their cooperation by being not only *δρθόδοξος* δὲ τῇ πίστει, but also *ἀσκητὴς καὶ ὑπηρέτης Χριστοῦ*.⁴ When it came to accepting ecclesiastical office outside the ascetical sphere, there was, not surprisingly, much more resistance.⁵ Even those who allowed themselves, like Netras and Apphy, to become bishops did so with considerable misgivings, and with the determination that they would continue as far as possible to put into practice in their new surroundings the ideals of their former ascetical careers.⁶

disassociation of the monastery from the local church, *Contra Iohannem Hierosolymitanum* 41*, *PL* xxiii. 392–3.

¹ G Bessarion 5, Moses 2 (which virtually = Pior 3), Simon 2. The role of the clergy in summoning their help was important: ascetics who interfered on their own initiative could expect a sharp rebuke, G Agathon 14. Ammonas was unwilling to stand in judgement over others, G Ammonas 9; but it is not clear whether, in this instance, he was already a bishop, as in Ammonas 8 and 10. For suggestions on this confusion, cf. Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, p. 61, n. 2. *VP* 76, shows Pachomius exercising 'charismatic' judgement: cf. below, p. 417, n. 2.

² Nau 162.

³ *VP* 29. Pachomius had not been completely unwilling to co-operate; but no doubt the threat of ordination deterred him. Chitty suggests that the foundation of Pabau at this time, in a neighbouring diocese, may have been a move to escape Serapion's jurisdiction, 'A note . . .', p. 381.

⁴ *VP* 81. Bousset points to a general absence of theological concern in the *Apophthegmata*, pp. 83 sq. Certainly, Agathon 5 (which describes heresy in spiritual terms, as *χωρισμός . . . ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ*) and Daniel 7 (which suggests that the potential errors of simple faith detract from the value of ascetical labour: cp. Cassian's critique of Serapion, who bewailed Theophilus's initial condemnation of anthropomorphism, *Conferences*, x. 3–5) are both late; but cf. also G Theodore of Pherme 4, and Nau 330, which both recommend that one avoid the company of heretics.

⁵ G Theodore of Pherme 25, Macarius Aeg. 1, Matoes 9, Moses 4.

⁶ They became bishops of Pharan and Oxyrynchus: cf. below, p. 415, n. 3.

In addition to the partial willingness of ascetics themselves, the desire of bishops to gain control of the movement as a whole helped to make asceticism less isolated from the general life of the Church.¹ The process began early, but developed very slowly, and in Egypt never achieved complete success. There would always be those who felt that death to the world involved being dead to bishops as well.² Pachomius never underestimated the importance and the rights of bishops;³ but he would attempt in a subtle way to restrict their activities to the spiritual plane.⁴ He tried, without complete success, to avoid identifying authority and office. There had to be room for that *έξοντα* which Theodore possessed, and which was the basis of true authority. Some men in the Church, Pachomius admitted, were shepherds, and others sheep. Yet in truth all men were sheep under Christ the one shepherd. Christ had given his apostles the command to feed his flock; and bishops certainly inherited that fatherly responsibility. Yet there were others who lacked official status in the Church, and who could nevertheless lay claim to the same inheritance, and exercise the same function—those who heard the voice of Christ within them.⁵ In this, Pachomius was not far from the radical assertions of Heron (directed against Evagrius): οὐ χρὴ γάρ διδασκάλοις ἔτεροις προσέχειν παρεκτὸς τοῦ Χριστοῦ.⁶ It is interesting to find, therefore, that the first real bid for episcopal control supposedly took place among the Pachomian communities. We have spoken of Pachomius's 'trial' at the synod of Latopolis, and of attempts by Serapion and Arius to involve the monks in their pastoral enterprises. The most striking indication of how matters may have developed comes at the end of the *Vita Prima*. When Athanasius met Theodore, on his triumphant return to Alexandria in A.D. 363, he insisted that the title of father belonged not to the bishops but to the monks and their leaders—to Theodore in particular, in whom the patriarch professed to see Christ himself. Theodore was quick to return the compliment: ἀλλὰ ὄρῶντες σε, ὡς τὸν Χριστὸν ὄρῶμεν.⁷ It was Theodore's opinion that prevailed. In the closing

¹ Some interesting hints: Nau 161, a *πρεσβύτερος τῆς Σκήτεως* goes up to Alexandria to see Theophilus; G Moses 5, neighbours report Moses for breaking the fast, and the clerics rebuke him publicly (cp. the role of the *πρεσβύτερος* in Nau 242); and Nau 177, where a *δάκονος* visiting a *κουόβιον* may well have been an episcopal agent.

² *HL* xvi.

³ *VP* 2: . . . τῶν ἐπισκόπων ὁδηγούντων αὐτοὺς πρὸς τὸν θεὸν κατὰ τὴν τῶν ἀποστόλων διδαχὴν . . .

⁴ *VP* 37: mothers have come with episcopal letters, demanding to see their sons; but Pachomius confidently suggests that the bishops will value more highly the women's obedient acceptance of Pachomius's prohibition than they would Pachomius's acceptance of their original command. ⁵ *VP* 135. ⁶ *HL* xxvi.

⁷ *VP* 144. One cannot help recalling the later cry of Theophilus, faced with the monks who objected to his festal letter against anthropomorphism, οὐτως ὑμᾶς εἴδον, ὡς θεοῦ πρόσωπον, *Socrates, HE* vi. 7, *PG* lxvii. 684B.

pages of the *Vita*, after the death of Theodore himself, Athanasius is seen taking more and more control. He virtually confirms Orsisius in his position as leader for the second time; he requests to be kept in touch with community affairs; and he directs the prayers of the monks to intercession for the peace of the Church, seen more as an institution threatened by division than as a vehicle of salvation. The concern is no longer pastoral, but centres on questions of discipline and order, just as Pachomius had formerly feared.¹ Now the composition of the *Vita Prima* may have been directly encouraged by the patriarch Theophilus;² and it would have been natural for the writer to create among his readers not only a sense of monastic tradition, but also responsible attitudes towards the hierarchical structure of the Church. Yet the wish had scarcely been fulfilled, even at the end of the fourth century. Evagrius was recognized in the Cells as a man who might elsewhere have become a bishop; but this gave him no right to speak out of turn in a general assembly of monks, even though that same assembly had willingly accepted the leadership of a presbyter. Such pretensions were regarded as not only unacceptable but also alien.³ Attempts at episcopal control had so far only touched the surface. The patriarch of Alexandria had still to accept with grace the rebukes of Arsenius; and even when his reception among ascetics was more favourable, he was reduced to adding to the words of holy men some feeble *imprimatur* of his own.⁴

This, then, is the picture which emerges from the eastern literature, the framework within which spiritual authority was exercised. But the literature itself became part of the picture, because it had subsequently a considerable effect on the movement it portrayed. Monasticism was becoming anxious, if not to defend itself, at least to explain itself to the outside world; anxious, too, that others should be attracted to its own way of life. Writing was a means to this end; and the written word sprang directly from the already existing oral tradition. The writers' motive was not to establish a permanent group memory: this was already preserved in an acceptable and durable form within the oral tradition.⁵ Authors were, rather, responding to the needs of the more settled, more

¹ *VP* 150.

² Chitty, *Desert*, p. 55.

³ G Evagrius 7.

⁴ Ἀλλη ὁδὸς οὐκ ἔστιν, εἰ μὴ αὗτη G Theophilus 1.

⁵ For an alternative interpretation, cf. Chitty, *Desert*, p. 67. It could at least be argued that an increasing appeal to the past, and a new enthusiasm for writing, revealed in Nau 228, were themselves features of the 'moral decay' which, according to Chitty, the *Apophthegmata* attempted to cure. Moreover Nau 228 is concerned also with the wider problem of a decline in the interpretation of Scripture. One should read in this light the warning of Poemen, εἰ οὐ διναστεῖσα πάπαν, καλόν ἔστι μᾶλλον ἐν τοῖς λόγοις τῶν γερόντων, καὶ μὴ ἐν τῇ Γραφῇ. Κίνδυνος γὰρ ἔστι οὐ μικρός, Ammoun of Nitria 2 (but, for the date, cf. Chitty, *Desert*, p. 79, n. 83).

complex, and more corporate ascetical society which we have just described.¹ In the first place, the written word provided an alternative to the charismatic authority of the individual holy man. Certainly the compiler of the *Apophthegmata* saw his work in this light. The collection was designed πρὸς ζῆλον καὶ παιδείαν καὶ μίμησιν τῶν τὴν οὐράνιον πολιτείαν ἐθελόντων κατορθώσαι.² Ζῆλος, παιδεία and μίμησις were precisely the effects formerly produced by the epigrammatic wisdom, the detailed advice and the vivid example of the desert fathers. Palladius regarded his writings in the same manner. They marked the beginning of a new tradition, a new pattern of discipleship and spiritual formation; and by presenting as examples the lives of holy men, Palladius hoped that his readers would become examples in their turn.³ He also felt in some sense inspired by God; and for him this distinguished the *Lausiac History* from more secular literature.⁴ The written word now had the ascetical force formerly found only in the λόγος of the fathers. Palladius believed, like Cassian, that books were windows into another world; it was in their pages, now, that one came face to face with holy men and women.⁴

This implied further that such a literary tradition would make available to ever greater numbers the teaching of acknowledged masters, now perhaps long dead.⁵ Pachomius was one of the first to use writing as a means of ascetical formation (which suggests, again, that this literary development was bound up with the increasing predominance of the coenobitic over the solitary life). He seems also to have accepted that the more legalistic character of a written rule would bring with it lower standards⁶—in itself a common feature when appeal is made on behalf of some ideal to a new and larger audience. Palladius supports this impression by suggesting that Pachomius's more regularized pattern of government had in mind the widest possible pool of ascetical manpower, and was designed for the weaker aspirant, providing safeguards and directions which those more perfect would not have required.⁷ The *Lausiac History* itself, taken as a whole, seems to have had in mind a similar broadening of appeal. Palladius adopted a lofty viewpoint, which enabled him to analyse the essence of asceticism without feeling tied to

¹ A phrase in *VP* 54, referring to Pachomius's rule, καὶ ἔγραψεν αὐτοῖς εἰς μνήμην, points to a more likely link between writing and memory.

² *PG* lxxv. 72A.

³ *HL*, Preface.

⁴ *Ibid.*, and Cassian, *Conferences*, Third Preface (between xvii and xviii). Cf. *VP* 59.

⁵ The compiler of the *Apophthegmata* desired ὥφελῆσαι τοὺς πολλούς, *PG* lxxv.

73A.

⁶ συντάξας . . . τὸ ἔδυμα αὐτῶν εὐμέτρως, τὴν τροφὴν ἐν ισότητι καὶ τὸ κοιμηθῆναι αὐτῶν εὐσχημόνως, *VP* 25; and ἵνα μή τις βλάψῃ τὸν πλησίον, ἀλλ' ἔκαστος τῷ δρῷ αὐτοῦ στοιχήσῃ· καλὴ γὰρ ἡ τάξις· ὁ μὲν τέλειος καὶ ἐν ἀταξίᾳ ἀπρόσκοπός ἐστιν, [διὰ δὲ τοὺς νηπιωτέρους χρὴ φυλάττειν ἡμᾶς τὴν τάξιν], *VP* 54.

⁷ *HL* xxiii.

particular forms or areas.¹ This was the mark not of a traveller but of a compiler: it was a specifically literary feat. In the dedication to Lausus itself, however, there is foreshadowed a shift of attention from the desert to the city, from rigorous solitude to pious domesticity. The structure of the book was surely deliberate. All the more important, therefore, is the quality of its final portraits, presenting us with the well-born in their private houses, unobtrusively attending to their own spiritual welfare and that of their relatives and servants, engaging in good works, and maintaining the correctest relationship with priests and bishops.² This was precisely the shift of attention which, in the previous generation, Jerome had striven so successfully to achieve.

In promoting these changes, ascetical literature was simply carrying forward one more stage a process already under way in the oral teaching of the fathers. We have already pointed to the gradual decline in their charismatic powers. Not only did their disciples come to depend less on their verbal instruction, and more on their visible example: they themselves, when subsequently called upon to teach, felt compelled to appeal more and more to the words, counsel, and example of their predecessors, the ἀειμνηστοι πατέρες.³ The literature merely emphasized this attitude of loyalty to the past; and, by its lasting quality, it not only reflected, in a new generation, the absence of fresh inspiration, but also made that absence less important.

Similar features appear in the development of western ascetical literature, providing us with the first substantial evidence that it reflected attitudes of mind not totally distinct from those of the East. There are signs, for example, that the biographers of Ambrose, Martin, and Augustine saw themselves as part of a literary tradition, new in its conception, but already possessing a short history of its own.⁴ There are signs that, as in the east, an oral tradition had already established itself before the publication of the written material. The *Vita Martini* refers explicitly to oral evidence;⁵ and some passages, especially those concerned with dreams and visions, point to the existence of a well-defined group of disciples, who had preserved among themselves, and wished to hand on to others, their particular interpretation of Martin's ideals

¹ R. Reitzenstein, *Historia Monachorum u. Historia Lausiaca* (Göttingen, 1916), pp. 42–8.

² *HL* lvi, lvii, lxi, and lxvii.

³ G Theodore of the Ennaton 2. In addition to the references given above, p. 384, n. 4, cf. also G Dioscorus 2, Evagrius 6, Isaac of the Cells 7, Nisteroos 2, Poemen 31, Pistros, Pistamon and Peter Pionita 2; Nau 141, 264; *HL* iv.

⁴ *VM* i. 1–5; *VAug*, Preface, 2; *VA* 1 (this last making explicit reference to the *Vita Antonii*, to Jerome on Paul, and to Sulpicius on Martin).

⁵ *VM* v. 6, vii. 7, xxiv. 8. Cf. Fontaine, *Vie* I. 50 in particular.

and work.¹ Possidius, in his life of Augustine, recounts sayings of Ambrose and of another unnamed bishop. These are, in effect, western apophthegmata; and since they are interpreted further by Augustine himself, they reveal in miniature a long-standing oral tradition translated into literary form.² There is evidence, again, that these western writers regarded their work as establishing a new type of authority. Sulpicius is a particularly striking example in this respect. In one of his opening remarks, 'regnum Dei non in eloquentia sed in fide constat', he betrayed a fear that the book he was writing might stand between the reader and Martin himself, as an object of quite independent worth and beauty.³ Nevertheless there was, he thought, a need for such a biography, 'quia, etsi ipsi non ita viximus ut exemplo aliis esse possimus, dedimus tamen operam, ne is lateret qui esset imitandus'.⁴ He was unwilling to take upon himself the role of ascetical teacher, and felt that he lacked the 'charism of the word'. These shortcomings on his part were to be compensated by the book itself, regarded as a new and alternative source of spiritual authority.

Whether, like Palladius, any of these western writers was trying to engage the attention of a new type of audience, more or less different from that which had been formed by the direct teaching and example of the holy man whose life he described, is much harder to decide on the basis of internal evidence alone. The writings of Jerome and Cassian show that western ascetics could address a traditional message to differently situated readers. Cassian obviously crystallized an oral tradition for the benefit of a new audience in another environment; and in his letters and other writings Jerome may also have been drawing only less obtrusively upon ascetical teaching and patterns of life which he had heard and seen in the East. Much less convincing is the suggestion that in the *Vita Martini* Sulpicius was trying to make an unlettered Martin of Tours the acceptable hero of a more highly educated clientele.⁵ There

¹ Martin told some associates about his visions, *VM* xxi. 3; and others had witnessed his struggles with demons, *VM* xxii. 3. The dream recounted after Martin has shared his cloak, *VM* iii. 3-5, offers a theological reflection upon an act of simple moral worth, and may represent a subsequent attempt by others (not necessarily Sulpicius) to give the event a wider significance. The same may be true of Martin's vision of the devil, *VM* xxiv. 4-8. Visions now represent a dialogue not only with God but with a reading public.

² *VAG* xxvii. 6-10.

³ *VM*, Preface, 3. Cf. also *VM* xxvii. 6-7; *VA* 1.

⁴ *VM* i. 6. The *Vita* was designed to make Martin's 'virtus' better known, *VM*, Preface, 5 (and notice how Martin is later made to point to Paulinus as an example, *VM* xxv. 4). Ambrose's biographer declares the same motive, *VA* 2, and exhorts his readers to imitate the bishop, *VA* 55.

⁵ Fontaine, *Vie* I. 137-9.

are signs that both he and the readers whom he had more immediately in mind might willingly have tried to escape from their sophisticated culture, and to adopt a more simple pattern of religious dedication.¹

The factual account presented in the biographies of Ambrose, Martin, and Augustine was intended by their authors to suggest that the bishops laid claim to a spiritual authority basically ascetical in its character and inspiration. This becomes particularly clear in the light of the eastern evidence. To begin with, the writers describe in some detail how their subjects were involved in the organization and government of monastic communities. Their personality and initiative directly inspires the formation of those communities, and ensures their own recognition as spiritual leaders. In the case of Ambrose the emphasis is not particularly heavy, in spite of our knowledge from other sources of his interest in the ascetical movement.² But both Martin and Augustine, especially in the course of their early careers, are portrayed as responsible for the establishment of a whole series of such groups. There are Martin's first efforts at Milan, and afterwards on the island of Gallinaria; and then, with Hilary's return from exile, come the new communities at Poitiers and later at Tours.³ The life of Augustine presents us with a similar picture of a man putting into effect in different places one predominantly monastic ambition.⁴ He shows an early desire to identify himself with the 'pusillus grex' of professional ascetics; in Africa, he founds a community on his own estate near Thagaste; and, after ordination, he

¹ Sulpicius appears to approve of the lesser importance attached to writing at Marmoutier, *VM* x. 6, and of the nobility's willing abasement there—'longe aliter educati ad hanc se humilitatem et patientiam coegerant', *VM* x. 8. The actual *narrative* of the *Vita* makes little concession to literary taste. On the other hand, the subjects of the biographies themselves are portrayed as writers. We know that Martin wrote letters, *VM* xix. 1. Augustine used writing in both the monastic sphere, *VAug* iii. 2, and the pastoral, *VAug* ix. 3–4, and was anxious thereby 'instruere eos, qui essent idonei et alias docere', *VAug* xix. 5. Perhaps it was on account of this less obtrusive influence that Augustine was dubbed by his enemies a 'seductor et deceptor animarum', *VAug* ix. 4. Ambrose was marked out (by the miracle of the bees) as one who would teach by writing, *VA* 3; and Paulinus said he wrote continually, *VA* 38: he mentions in particular his book for Pansophius, *VA* 28.

² Apart from Ambrose's writings, cf. Augustine, *Confessions*, viii. 6, and Jerome, *Ep.* xxii. 22.

³ Milan, *VM* vi. 4; Gallinaria, *VM* vi. 5; Ligugé, *VM* vii. 1; and Marmoutier, *VM* x. *passim*.

⁴ Possidius's handling of this theme—Augustine's consistent dedication, faced with a variety of opportunities—shows that he did appreciate the reality of development in Augustine's life. Cf. the less favourable critique by H.-J. Diesner, 'Possidius und Augustinus', *Studia Patristica*, VI (Berlin, 1962), pp. 350–65, with the opinion of Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (London, 1967), p. 409.

establishes his 'monasterium intra ecclesiam' at Hippo.¹ Not surprisingly, therefore, against this background of persistent determination to lead an ascetical life in the company of others, the biographers give more particular indications of their subjects' monastic character.² Yet this is not, of course, the whole story. The three men are also shown throwing themselves wholeheartedly into a round of pastoral duties, exemplified above all by their confrontation with pagans and heretics,³ and by their involvement in the official government of the Church.⁴ We would expect as much in the biography of a bishop. What is surprising is that the biographers state these facts with complete openness, passing little comment on the potential contradiction between this account of pastoral activity and their own heavy emphasis on the ascetical lives of the men concerned.

It is tempting to suppose, therefore, that at least some western bishops of the period were leading double lives, trying to fulfil two different functions at once. Yet the biographies themselves give little solid reason for supposing that such was the case. They certainly do not speak of 'monk-bishops', which would in any case only formulate the problem in different words: even supposing that such an avocation was recognized at the time, one cannot escape from the puzzling fact that the lives of these men displayed little of the tension and frustration which the term implies; little of the compromise and qualified achievement that would seem to have been inevitable. The clue to this continuing balance in their personalities and their consistent sense of purpose lay in the spiritual authority which they felt themselves to possess. If we examine what appears to be two types of activity in the biographies, the ascetical and the pastoral, we find that in both situations the same kind of authority is being described. Ambrose, for instance, is portrayed by Paulinus in predominantly pastoral terms; and he recounts such events as the visit of certain Persians to Milan, 'potentissimi et sapientissimi viri', as

¹ Early desires, *VAug* ii. 1; *Thagaste*, *VAug* iii. 1-2; Hippo, *VAug* v. 1.

² This is particularly marked in Sulpicius. Even as a soldier, Martin was 'non miles, sed monachus', his inspiration very much that of an ascetic: 'de crastino non cogitabat', *VM* ii. 7-8. His journey to convert his parents, undertaken after a vision, is described as a 'peregrinatio', *VM* v. 5 (as is Sulpicius's journey to see Martin, *VM* xxv. 1). He left his monastery with great reluctance, *VM* ix. 1, and fearlessly presented himself as a candidate for episcopacy with unkempt hair and dress, *VM* ix. 3. During his episcopal career, his personal manner of life was still that of a monk, a round of fasting and prayer, involving hard work and frugal sustenance, *VM* xxvi. 2; Sulpicius, *Ep.* i. 10.

³ Martin's concern with heretics is very formalized in the *Vita*, mainly *VM* v and vi, but at the same time largely ineffectual. For Augustine, cf. especially *VAug* vi and ix; Ambrose, *VA* 14.

⁴ *VM* xvi and xx. 1; *VAug* viii and xiii.

proof of the splendour and effect which Ambrose created in his capacity as bishop.¹ Yet this story illustrates rather well the point we are making. These Persians had been attracted some distance by Ambrose's personal reputation; and they brought with them 'plurimas quaestiones ut ex his probarent sapientiam viri'. They were inspired, in other words, by precisely the motives of curiosity which moved some of those who visited the fathers of the desert. Ambrose showed less anger than Moses, Poemen, and Arsenius—a sign of his willingness, as we would expect, to make himself available to a wider public; and he held the visitors in conversation for a whole day and much of the night. Palladius tells how Antony did the same, faced with a similar type of guest.² Egyptians who visited him at Pispis were entertained in a manner familiar from the pages of the *Apophthegmata*. They were given a little food, and, after joining Antony in a short prayer, they departed. Visitors from Palestine, however, whose asceticism was more intellectual and subdued, would sit with Antony the whole night through, talking of matters pertaining to salvation. Ambrose is presented, therefore, like Antony, not only as a man of wisdom and reputation, but as one who possessed the insight and skill much prized among ascetics from both East and West, the ability to tailor one's method and message exactly to the requirements of one's questioner.

In the case of Martin and Augustine, the evidence is even more extensive and impelling. Both were men publicly admired, and urged by their bishops to accept office in the Church, so that their talents might be directed to a pastoral end. It is significant, therefore, that almost the first action mentioned in their lives, following upon their ordination, is the setting up of some kind of monastic community. The impression given by Possidius is that Augustine did so immediately. In ordaining him priest to preach on his behalf, Valerius had appealed to the practice of the eastern churches,³ and it could be that this associated foundation of a monastery was linked by Possidius with the confused identification of asceticism and church structure taking place in the east at the time.⁴ Sulpicius strengthens this suspicion by his account of the relations between Martin and Hilary. Before the latter's exile, Martin had sought him out primarily as a pillar of orthodoxy; and it was on this account that he had allowed himself to become closely involved in

¹ *VA* 25.

² *HL* xxi.

³ *V Aug* v. 4.

⁴ 'Valerius acted as a Greek: he was accustomed both to monks and to priests who might preach', Peter Brown, *Augustine*, p. 140. For later eastern contacts, through Alypius, cf. Luc Verheijen, *La règle de saint Augustin*, II (Paris, 1967), p. 169.

Hilary's pastoral concerns.¹ When Hilary returned from the East, however, Martin's relationship with him became immediately more personal in quality, and inspired him to endeavours which were at first predominantly monastic. The two factors which may have influenced Augustine—pastoral necessity and patterns of asceticism in the East—are in Martin's biography separated in time, and therefore more clearly discernable.² Possidius reveals further how Augustine reacted to the change of circumstance demanded by his eventual consecration as bishop. He was still a preacher of the word, although now endowed with a greater authority.³ Yet he did not think of himself in this way, as having merely gained a new dignity. Rather he welcomed in the change a fresh opportunity to testify in public to his inner faith and religious enthusiasm, a faith and enthusiasm which had endured throughout his former ascetical and priestly career.⁴ Augustine brought to each new position of responsibility the ambitions and ideals of his former state; and it was not until the writing of the *Confessions* that his spiritual development caught up, as it were, with his official position in the Church, so that he was able at last to give an account of his inner life which accurately reflected the pressures and responsibilities of his pastoral office.

Sulpicius makes the clearest assertion that such an exact correspondence could be achieved between one's spirituality and an ecclesiastical career. The terminology in which he does so vividly recalls the ideals of Egyptian monasticism, and attempts to show that Martin's interior life was consistently ascetical in character. Sulpicius says of him, 'Idem enim constantissime perseverabat qui prius fuerat. Eadem in corde eius humilitas, eadem in vestitu eius vilitas erat; atque ita, plenus auctoritatis et gratiae, inplebat episcopi dignitatem, ut non tamen propositum monachi virtutemque desereret.'⁵ This 'monastic virtue' informed the lives of these bishops in much the same way as it did those of eastern ascetics. They certainly possessed τὸ χόρισμα τοῦ λόγου, closely associated, as in the East, with an understanding of Scripture. Quotations were used as powerful weapons against evil spirits,⁶ as well as a basis for the

¹ '... sanctum Hilarium ... cuius tunc in Dei rebus spectata et cognita fides habebatur, expetiit ...', *VM* v. 1.

² *VM* vii. 1. Of course, Martin had practised asceticism, according to Sulpicius, before Hilary's exile; but there is a great difference between the caution and obscurity of his settlements at Milan and on Gallinaria, and the confidence and positive development at Ligugé.

³ *V Aug* ix. 1.
⁴ *Ibid.*, 'paratus semper poscentibus reddere rationem de fide et spe quae in Deum est'.

⁵ *VM* x. 1-2.
⁶ *VM* vi. 2. Cf. Nau 184: καν οὐκ οἰδαμεν τῶν ὥρμάτων τὴν δύναμιν ὡν λαλοῦμεν, ἀλλ' οἱ δαιμones ἀκούοντες φόβῳ ἀναχωροῦσιν.

conversion and guidance of men.¹ Such virtuosity was based on more than familiarity with the text. 'Quam in absolvendis scripturarum quaestionebus promptus et facilis', wrote Sulpicius of Martin;² and of Augustine Possidius tells us that his writings were imbued 'rationis copia atque auctoritate sanctorum scripturarum'.³ The study of Scripture turned Augustine from the Manichees,⁴ occupied his attention as a monk,⁵ and inspired his pastoral endeavours.⁶ The resulting gifts of speech could affect both body and soul. Ambrose brought healing to Stilicho's servant while the words were scarcely out of his mouth;⁷ and when a digression in his sermon unexpectedly touched the heart of the Manichee Firmus, Augustine acknowledged the inspiration of God, 'in cuius manu sunt et nos et sermones nostri'.⁸ The bishops also possessed that spiritual insight typical of ascetical leaders in Egypt. Augustine, while still at Thagaste, used his receptiveness to inspiration for the benefit of his friends: 'de his quae sibi Deus cogitanti atque oranti intellectu revelebat et praesentes et absentes sermonibus ac libris docebat'.⁹ Martin, whose all-seeing eye the devil could never escape,¹⁰ also used this gift in the monastic sphere, protecting his monks, for example, against the pretended authority of pseudo-prophets: 'unde quis dubitet hanc etiam Martini fuisse virtutem, ut fantasiam suam diabolus, cum erat Martini oculis ingerenda, dissimulare diutius aut tegere non posset'.¹¹ But the same skill was turned to pastoral use. It was with the aid of this insight that Martin was able to control, by questioning a demoniac, the demoralizing panic which had seized a city at the rumour of imminent barbarian attack.¹² He was able to perceive in the same way that the pagan gods who claimed so great a hold over the hearts of his people (a hold he never dismissed as fanciful or unimportant) were no more than manifestations of his constant enemy the devil.¹³ The physical penance, fasting, and prayer, which properly marked the ascetic, could achieve in Gaul, as well as Alexandria, such useful pastoral ends as the destruction of pagan temples.¹⁴ Even in their capacity

¹ VM v. 6.

² VM xxv. 6.

³ VAug vii. 3.

⁴ VAug i. 5.

⁵ VAug iii. 2.

⁶ It was in this sense that his dispute with Fortunatus was 'de lege', VAug vi. 2.

⁷ VA 43.

⁸ VAug xv. 3. Cf. VP 97: Pachomius's words by chance arouse compunction in a bystander for whom they were not intended; and he takes the opportunity to reaffirm that it is God who guides one's speech.

⁹ VAug iii. 2.

¹⁰ VM xxi. 1.

¹¹ VM xxiii. 11.

¹² VM xviii. 2.

¹³ VM xxii. 1-2: 'quocumque ieris vel quaecumque temptaveris, diabolus tibi adversabitur', VM vi. 2. Cf. Evagrius and the 'heretical demons', which he overcame διὰ βραχέων λόγων, HL xxxviii.

¹⁴ 'Itaque secessit . . . Ibi per triduum cilicio tectus et cinere, ieunans semper atque orans, precabatur ad Dominum, ut, quia templum illud euertere humana manus non potuisset, uirtus illud diuina dirueret', VM xiv. 4.

as judges, and as administrators of a system of discipline and penance, these men showed the tolerance of a father. Ambrose, a man keenly aware of his dignity as a bishop,¹ would nevertheless weep when called upon to fulfil such duties, seeking thereby to inspire the sinner to repentance; and he would pray for him to God, 'bonum relinquens exemplum posteris sacerdotibus, ut intercessores apud Deum magis sint, quam accusatores apud homines'.² The description, and the moral, would not have seemed out of place in the pages of the *Apophthegmata*.³ Augustine, too, felt ill at ease in the role of judge. Described by Possidius as 'indisciplinaciones pie ac sancte tolerans fratrum',⁴ he regretted the necessity imposed on him by his office, and conducted himself in a typically monastic fashion, even when lay people were involved. The episcopal court was in his eyes a place to interpret Scripture, to gain a friend, and to bring all men under the authority of God.⁵ Martin displayed a similar gentleness of manner, 'neminem iudicans, neminem damnans'; and he never appealed merely to his rank in order to gain the respect and obedience of his clergy.⁶

The heavy emphasis on miracle in the *Vita Martini* provides particularly interesting material, as far as parallels with the East are concerned. Although it is an emphasis which contrasts with the reticence displayed in some texts of the *Apophthegmata*, it also reveals a willingness on Martin's part to employ his charismatic gifts outside the ascetical group.⁷ Martin could himself show reluctance when called upon to work a miracle; and to make the excuse that 'hoc suae non esse virtutis' was to echo exactly the assertion of Poemen, ἐγώ πρᾶγμα οὐκ ἔχω.⁸ Nevertheless there is a very public air about much of Martin's wonder-working; and it is interesting to find that in the *Vita* many of these acts of healing appear to have been carefully restricted to 'ecclesiastical' places or occasions. Martin was actually in church when asked to heal a young girl at Trèves; he was urged to respond to the appeal by the bishops who happened to be present; and, avoiding the spectacular gestures of which he was certainly capable, he cured the girl by anointing her with blessed oil.⁹ In the case of the slave of Taetradius, the cure was effected by the laying on of hands. As a result Taetradius himself was converted; but

¹ His rebuke to an Arian virgin skilfully combined personal and official dignity: 'Etsi ego indignus tanto sacerdotio sum, tamen te non convenit vel tuam professionem in qualemcumque sacerdotem manus inicere', *VA* 11.

² *VA* 39.

³ Cp. G Ammonas 9, Poemen 22 and 23; Nau 180.

⁴ *VAG* xviii. 8; cf. also xxv. 3.

⁵ *VAG* xix. 2-5.

⁶ *VM* xxvi. 5.

⁷ Hence Fontaine's suggestion that in the *VM* the miraculous is always 'fonctionnelle et liée à l'annonce de la Parole', *Vie I.* 163. One cannot agree, however, with his added assertion that in Egypt the same display of power was 'gratuite'.

⁸ *VM* xvi. 5; G Poemen 3 and 33.

⁹ *VM* xvi. 2-7.

this did not involve any spectacular commitment to the ascetical life: he simply accepted the more institutional status of catechumen, and was eventually baptized.¹ It is true that when Martin cured the daughter of Arborius, her father responded more dramatically to such a demonstration of spiritual power, promising that his daughter would be consecrated to a life of virginity; but this generous impulse, too, was put into effect in a formal church ceremony, in which Martin solemnly clothed the girl with the monastic habit.² Even when he interrogated the demoniac, whose evil spirit had spread disturbing rumours about a barbarian attack, the impressive scene took place in a church.³ Now these examples of Martin's 'gratia curationum' are all linked together by Sulpicius in one section of the *Vita*; and the continuous reference to their taking place in church, or at a time when Martin was carrying out specifically episcopal duties, seems more than likely to have been deliberate. Isolating them in this way also sets them apart from certain other miracle stories, particularly those concerned with Martin's less organized forays against pagan gods and temples. More individual in style (and more typical of Martin, as one has been led to think of him under the influence of Sulpicius), these latter not only contrast with the more formal incidents, but are themselves linked by certain common themes. They were of less immediate benefit to individuals; and they proved that Martin possessed a power over nature which eastern ascetics, even in the earlier periods, would readily have recognised as a charismatic gift associated with authoritative sanctity.⁴ The power over nature is specifically mentioned. Martin defies the force of gravity by deflecting in its fall a tree which was about to crush him.⁵ He leaps upon a rooftop to fight a fire, and, 'mirum in modum, cerneret contra vim venti ignem retorqueri, ut compugnantium inter se elementorum quidam conflictus videretur'.⁶ There is the strange account of Martin's attack on the kingfishers. This not only involves an intervention in the natural order, but is used by Martin as an opportunity to instruct the monks who accompany him. Sulpicius states that the power which destroyed the birds was precisely that which Martin used against the demons themselves.⁷ It is difficult to deny that there is in the *Vita*

¹ *VM* xvii. 1-4.

² *VM* xix. 1-2.

³ *VM* xviii. 1-2. Link these events with the formality of Augustine's healing powers, *VAG* xxvii. 2.

⁴ Even the measured Cassian, who was reluctant to recount wonders, and who thought it possible that some might be demonic illusions, granted that 'curationes' might sometimes be effected through men of sanctity 'signorum gratia', and 'ob aedificationem ecclesiae', *Conferences*, xv. 1.

⁵ *VM* xiii. 3-8.

⁶ *VM* xiv. 2.

⁷ Sulpicius, *Ep.* iii. 8: 'Imperat deinde potenti verbo ut . . . aridas peterent

Martini an element of *res, non verba* typical of the Roman tradition;¹ but Martin's remarkable vigour and impressive power would not have seemed wholly strange to eastern ascetics, depending as they did on more than their words to maintain their influence and prove their authority.² Moreover this distinction between the formal and the spectacular in Martin's miracles recalls again the pattern of development in the East, where men were gradually being drawn out of their private ascetical groups, to display their spiritual powers in a wider pastoral sphere.

Parallels with the East are suggested, not only by the types of activity we have described, but also by the response which that activity evoked. The preaching of Ambrose could awaken such faith in the most hardened Arian, that he would see an angel standing at the bishop's side, inspiring him as he spoke.³ Possidius tells of an *agens in rebus* from Hippo, who approached Augustine exactly as disciples approached the desert fathers. He heard of his fame; he greatly wished to see him face to face; and he believed that, hearing from Augustine's lips the word of God, he would sense within himself a power that would change him.⁴ The debate between Augustine and Fortunatus, one example of several such occasions, was not unlike the disputes which arose between ascetical leaders in Egypt.⁵ Both men were recognized by a section of the community as in some sense wise and saintly.⁶ They had, in effect, been giving that community contradictory *apophthegmata*, and were now called upon publicly to reconcile their positions if possible. It is in the *Vita Martini* that the response of others is catalogued most fully. Martin restored a catechumen to life; and the onlookers immediately acknowledged qualities in him over and above his sanctity. He was accepted as 'potens' and 'vere apostolicus';⁷ and this 'apostolica auctoritas' was understood to colour all his actions, both private and pastoral.⁸ Pagans

desertasque regiones . . . Ita . . . montes silvasque petierunt, non sine admiratione multorum, qui tantam in Martino virtutem viderent ut etiam avibus imperaret.'

¹ Fontaine, *Vie I*, p. 65.

² Cf. especially Paul in the *Apophthegmata*, whose ability to rip apart small reptiles with his bare hands was regarded as a *χάρις*, demonstrating that (like Adam before the Fall) he had that power over nature which belonged to the pure; cf. G Antony 36. Possidius's description of Augustine at his death—'Membris omnibus sui corporis incolumis, integro aspectu atque auditu', *V Aug* xxxi. 5—certainly echoes the emphasis at the end of the *Vita Antonii*, 93; and this, too, points to the perfect man's dominion over sinful nature: cf. Chitty, *Desert*, pp. 4–5. ³ *V A* 17. ⁴ *V Aug* iii. 3.

⁵ G Abraham 1 and Theodore of Eleutheropolis 2 (cf. with Cassian 4); Nau 174, 183, 216.

⁶ François Decret, *Aspects du manichéisme dans l'Afrique romaine* (Paris, 1970), pp. 39 sq. ⁷ *VM* vii. 7.

⁸ *VM* xx. 1. Cf. Fontaine, *Vie II*, pp. 631 sq.

were so impressed by Martin's preaching that they willingly destroyed their own temples; willingly repudiated their past, in other words, and changed the whole pattern of their lives, undergoing conversion in the fullest sense.¹ Even in the cases when temples were destroyed by more drastic means, the reader can lift away from Sulpicius's account the superficial cloak of the miraculous, and find revealed a more realistic lack of confidence among the pagan onlookers, an inevitable readiness to submit to this personality, so convinced in mind, so strong in faith, that he must be divinely guided and inspired.²

When Martin himself was called upon to assess the validity of another man's claim to possess authority, he was not concerned with the circumstances in which that authority was exercised, as if different types of authority were to be looked for in different situations. The true authority of a commanding and saintly personality was, for him, the same, wherever it was found. Martin's inquiry centred more upon interior, or at least less tangible factors, on the theological basis for exercising authority and accepting it in others. Even the conduct of such an inquiry was more an exercise in discernment than preservation of discipline and church structure. The case of Anatolius provides a clear instance of this interior and personal emphasis: his supposed authority was not related to any role within an institution, either monastic or hierarchical. God, he said, had spoken to him, and would give him a white garment, '*idque vobis signum erit me Dei esse virtutem, qui Dei veste donatus sim.*'.³ Martin quite literally saw through the falsity of this man's claim. The problem of how to assess authority had obviously deeply stirred the minds of both Martin and his biographer. Sulpicius regarded the increase in the number of pseudo-prophets as a sign that the coming of Antichrist was imminent.⁴ A similar fear lies behind Martin's vision of the devil.⁵ His arch-enemy appeared to him in the guise of Christ himself, presenting a radiant picture of authoritative majesty, remarkably similar to the later vision of Sulpicius himself, with which we started our investigation. Martin refused, however, to believe that so exalted an image could be reconciled with the suffering and humility of the crucified

¹ *VM* xv. 4.

² *VM* xiv. 7; cf. also xii. 4. For earlier examples of people's response to Martin, cf. his fellow soldiers ('... eum miro affectu uenerarentur'), *VM* ii. 7; the compunction of those who witnessed Martin's charity to the beggar, *VM* iii. 2; and the faith of the robber, *VM* v. 6.

³ *VM* xxiii. 5. Cf. the Spaniard in xxiv. 1: '... qui, cum sibi multis signis auctoritatem parauisset, eo usque elatus est, ut se Heliam profiteretur'.

⁴ *VM* xxiv. 3.

⁵ *VM* xxiv. 7. For other (but equally interesting and important) implications of this passage, cf. Basil Studer, 'Zu einer Teufelerscheinung in der Vita Martini des Sulpicius Severus', in *Oikumene* (Università di Catania, 1964), pp. 351-404.

Christ whom he followed, which represented for him a much more genuine picture of a man who was to be listened to and obeyed. Rejecting the vision in this way, Martin was undoubtedly making a statement about true religious authority; and it is very significant that the whole incident passed in such vivid terms into the oral tradition of his followers.

In formulating this whole argument, we must take very seriously these men's desire, expressly stated in their lives, particularly by Martin, to safeguard as bishops their original commitment to asceticism. This need not be a literary conceit on the part of their biographers, designed merely to emphasize the hero's consistency and strength of character.¹ A stress on *constantia*, traditional in classical literature, can be detected in the pages of Sulpicius; but even he would have recognized the extent to which it struck, nevertheless, at the essential concept of conversion. *Constantia* was a pagan ideal, which certain followers of Pachomius, for example, had admitted in their own ambition, and which they subsequently repudiated as an error.² Those in the East who did become bishops took very seriously the possibility that their virtue might thereby suffer, precisely because they knew well that virtue was no birthright.³ Sulpicius tells openly how Martin upheld against the devil himself the reality, the gratuitous and unpredictable quality of religious conversion.⁴ It was because of this drastic break in their lives that they refused to allow their ordination to effect a similar discontinuity.

Therefore in the biographies of these men we find a consistent pattern of behaviour, springing always from the same singleness of purpose, the same charismatic personality. It is not in these terms (of aim or character) that one can define any fragmentation in their lives. Yet the element of variety cannot be ignored. It would seem less misleading to suggest that there was in their careers a continual movement towards and away from some focus of concern, some natural resting place. They and the groups which formed around them seem at times to draw inwards upon themselves, and then on other occasions to turn their attention outwards, in response to wider opportunities and the needs of other people.⁵

¹ Fontaine, *Vie I*, p. 63.

² In the *Apophthegmata*, G Psenthaisius: 'Ἐνομίζομεν πάντας τοὺς ἀγίους οὐτως πεποιεῖσθαι ὅπό τοῦ θεοῦ . . . καὶ τοὺς ἀμαρτωλὸν μὴ διναμένους ζῆν εὐσεβῶς . . . Άρτι δὲ βλέπομεν τὴν ἀγαθότητα τοῦ θεοῦ φανερῶς ἐπὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν τούτου ὅτι ἐξ Ἑλλήνων γονέων ᾧ, τοσούτον θεοσεβῆς γέγονε . . .

³ G Apphy: μὴ ἄρα διὰ τὴν ἐπισκοπὴν ἀπῆλθεν ἢ χάρις ἀπ' ἔμοῦ. G Netras: ἵνα μὴ ἀπολέω τὸν μοναχὸν. Cf. Cassian on Archebius: '... id, quod ego amissum doleo quodque tradere iam perditum nequeo', *Conferences*, xi. 2.

⁴ VM xxii. 3-5.

⁵ Sulpicius, *Ep.* iii. 6-9, describes how Martin went out to settle some ecclesiastical dispute, and then returned to his monastery. Note phrases such as '... aut circa monasteria aut circa ecclesiam . . .', VM ii. 4; '... aut ecclesiis

The inward movement represents the formation, instruction and preservation of an intimate group of followers and disciples, attracted by the holy man's charismatic power, and recognizing his authority. It is within this framework that references to personality and human relationships have their place. In the *Vita Martini*, for example, we read of Martin's impact at Poitiers, where the catechumen whom he had cured accepted his leadership, 'cupiens sanctissimi viri institui disciplinis'.¹ Where one man took the initiative, others followed; and Sulpicius can soon after refer to the presence of a band of 'fratres'.² The same acceptance of Martin's authority by a clearly defined group of disciples permanently gathered about him appears at Tours: 'discipuli fere octoginta erant', Sulpicius tells us, 'qui ad exemplum beati magistri instituebantur'.³ It was a pattern which others would reproduce, arousing no jealousy in Martin. Of Clarus, one of Martin's most loyal and cherished disciples, Sulpicius tells us 'multi apud eum fratres commorarentur'.⁴ It should be noticed straight away that this more intimate activity was in no way restricted to the years before ordination or episcopal consecration. Augustine found in the company of his monks precisely the refuge and comfort which his episcopal duties demanded.⁵ His monastery was 'intra ecclesiam'.⁶ Martin's community near Tours, established after his consecration as bishop, was more remote; and we are reminded of Ambrose's monastery outside the walls of Milan. But, like Augustine, Martin could also withdraw to an inner sanctum of ascetical peace in the midst of his pastoral environment: 'adhaerenti ad ecclesiam cellula usus est'.⁷

The complementary outward movement, away from the group, reflects an awareness in the holy man that a wider public has need of his gifts. It is within this framework that the miracles of Martin acquire their fullest meaning: they show Martin not now as teacher but as intercessor. One must notice in this case that such an outward movement will take place even before the holy man has undertaken ecclesiastical office and pastoral responsibility. There are in the early lives of Martin and Augustine at least a handful of apostolic ventures. Martin attempted the conversion of his parents;⁸ and we have already mentioned Augustine's encounter with the *agens in rebus*.⁹ Moreover it is, at all times of

frequissimis aut monasteris . . . aut ecclesias aut monasteria . . .', *VM* xiii. 9; '. . . privatum et publice in domo et in ecclesia . . .', *VAG* vii. 1. Cf. Karl-Heinrich Lütcke's division between '*auctoritas* für die Gebildeten' and '*auctoritas* für die Ungebildeten', '*Auctoritas* bei Augustin' (Stuttgart, 1968), pp. 78–109.

¹ *VM* vii. 1. ² *VM* vii. 2. ³ *VM* x. 5. ⁴ *VM* xxiii. 2.

⁵ *VAG* xix. 6; xxv. ⁶ *VAG* v. 1. ⁷ *VM* x. 3. ⁸ *VM* vi. 3.

⁹ Augustine himself, hearing of the man's desire, travelled to see him, *VAG* iii. 4.

their lives, a movement made by the whole group. When engaged in activity which appears to be predominantly pastoral, the priest or bishop does not act alone. Faced with Firmus, converted by a chance digression in Augustine's sermon, Augustine himself is seated in the monastery, surrounded by his monks.¹ The *mise en scène* vividly recalls an incident in the life of Pachomius, when, in intriguingly similar circumstances, a man did penance at Pachomius's feet; and there a similar spiritual authority was acknowledged and exercised.² When Martin exposed the fraudulent martyr-shrine (almost his first official act as bishop), he was at one and the same time exercising his power of spiritual perception and making a statement about church discipline and episcopal authority. Yet the act itself, although inspired partly by the advice of his clergy, was not performed in their presence, nor with their immediate help. At the moment of truth, Martin's only companions were his fellow-monks.³ They were present, too, when Martin escaped death at the hands of the pagans beneath the falling tree.⁴ We learn from Sulpicius's appended letters that monks habitually accompanied Martin on all his episcopal visitations; and we know that he took the opportunity on these journeys to instruct them in the traditional manner.⁵ It is within this framework that one should consider the references made by Sulpicius and Possidius to the fact that the monastic households of Martin and Augustine produced an increasing number of recruits for the priesthood and episcopate.⁶

Having set out in such terms the apparent variety of endeavour in these men's lives, we should now be in a better position to identify more clearly the motives of their biographers. Each was taking up a position on the question of spiritual authority. The life of each holy man is presented as a continuous debate about the uses to which he should put his spiritual gifts. The writers demonstrated the ways in which personal charism, proper (as they thought) to every man of sanctity, achieved its effect in different situations, involving different responsibilities and opportunities. (This in itself reflected the attitudes of the east, where men accepted an immense variety of life-styles within ascetical society.⁷)

¹ *V Aug* xv. 5.

² *VP* 76: καὶ τῇ διακρίσει τοῦ πνεύματος διωρθώσατο αὐτὸν μετὰ τὴν ὁμολογίαν τοῦ σφάλματος.

³ The event would have taken place before Marmoutier could have flooded the clerical market with monastic candidates; and one must attach importance to the distinction between '... ab his, qui maiores natu erant, presbyteris uel clericis ...' and '... paucis secum adhibitis fratribus ...', *VM* xi. 1-5.

⁴ *VM* xiii. 7 and 9.

⁵ Sulpicius, *Ep.* i. 13 and iii. 7. Cf. G Antony 14, Arsenius 25 and Poemen 72.

⁶ *VM* x. 9; *V Aug* xi. 1-5.

⁷ G Ammonas 4, Eucharistos, Theodore of Pherme 1, Joseph of Panephysis 4, Poemen 29; Nau 134; *HL* vii, xiv, xxi, xxii, xxxvii and xlvi.

Then, with the deliberation of the propagandist, they pointed to the precise framework within which they felt that such a charism might most profitably be employed. So it was that Sulpicius placed the heaviest emphasis on Martin's pastoral success. On only one occasion does he admit that Martin felt the need to retire now and again from his round of episcopal duties;¹ and he gives little further evidence that the opportunity was ever taken. Martin associated closely with monks; but the events of the *Vita* show both himself and his ascetical companions always on the move. At the end of his life, the monastic framework does seem to have closed in on Martin; but other clergy attended him at his death; and his willingness, even then, to continue his pastoral labours is strongly emphasized.² In the work of Possidius there are similar emphases, but differences, also, as interesting and important. Augustine's legacy to the Church is asserted to include not only the monasteries, but also (mentioned in the first place) a strong and well-instructed pastoral clergy.³ The whole structure of Possidius's book suggests not only that the foundation of monasticism in North Africa was completely intertwined with Augustine's apostolic endeavours, but also that it was the Church that benefited most from this combination of self-perfection and pastoral zeal. The growth of the Church was achieved, according to Possidius, by the concrete fulfilment of monastic ideals: 'ac magis magisque, iuvante Christo, de die in diem augebatur et multiplicabatur *pacis unitas et ecclesiae Dei fraternitas*'.⁴ Yet this was an achievement which, rather than springing from the successful establishment of monasticism, flowed back from the Church into the monastic sphere, so that reconciliation within the religious community, for example, was seen in broadly ecclesiological terms.⁵ Possidius's final emphasis is on Augustine's ability as a preacher: 'sed ego arbitror plus ex eo proficere potuisse, qui eum et loquentem in ecclesia praesentem audire et videre potuerunt, et eius praesertim inter homines conversationem non

¹ '... cum inquietudinem se frequentantium ferre non posset . . .', *VM* x. 3.

² Sulpicius, *Ep.* iii. 10–16, especially the phrase, 'Domine, si adhuc populo tuo sum necessarius, non recuso laborem.'

³ *VAug* xxxi. 8.

⁴ *VAug* xiii. 1. Possidius hoped that the *Vita* would benefit the whole church, Preface, 1.

⁵ By an appeal to Matt. xviii. 15–17, 'If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault . . .', etc. Cf. Luc Verheijen, 'La Vie de saint Augustin par Possidius et la *Regula Sancti Augustini*', in *Mélanges offerts à Mlle Christine Mohrmann* (Utrecht-Anvers, 1963), pp. 278–9. One should note, however, a slightly contradictory, if less obtrusive, point in the *Vita*: the allusion to the early Christian community in Jerusalem, *VAug* v. 1, is made with reference to the monastery; and the economic relationship, for example, between the bishop's monastic household and the Christian body as a whole is seen much more in the formal terms of the Old Testament, *VAug* xxiii.

ignoraverunt'.¹ The world of Ambrose appears, in the pages of Paulinus, as rather less self-conscious, less concerned with the inner roots of the apostolate. Ambrose emerges from a secular background, with the attitudes of a politician; and there is an enduring, almost professional air about his pastoral career, and great emphasis on the respect due to the office of the priesthood.² Yet Paulinus was engaged in the same quest as Possidius and Sulpicius, attempting to define the personal qualities that lay behind this activity. He wished to show how Ambrose's career was a natural expression of one such quality in particular, the ability to move others by word and writing, and by a great gentleness of spirit.

The internal evidence of these biographies suggests, therefore, that one must investigate more fully the historical links between episcopal authority in the West and strictly ascetical developments in Egypt and other parts of the East. We have shelved for the moment the question of how accurate a picture we receive in these lives of Martin, Augustine, or Ambrose; nor have we tried to discover from other evidence what direct links there may have been between these men and the East. It is the motivation of the writers themselves that is immediately important, and the historical roots of that motivation. Regardless of whether or not the image of authority in their writings is true to life, they had at their disposal in this religious literature a powerful weapon, deliberately used, capable of bringing about considerable change in future patterns of church organization and apostolic enterprise. Their writings represent the beginnings of a programme whereby personal sanctity was harnessed to the purposes of the whole Church; a programme which could be modified later to match different situations (as the texts themselves already hint). The significance of these biographies lies in the fact that, inspired by eastern example, they proposed a new definition of spiritual power, decided how it was to operate in this or that set of circumstances, and set up an influential pattern of admiration, discipleship, and obedience for a new generation of churchmen.

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¹ *VAug* xxxi. 9.

² Background, *VA* 7 and 8. Pastoral: martyr-cult, *VA* 14; Persian embassy, *VA* 25; and Stilicho's servant, *VA* 43.